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ABSTRACT

The background and major activities of a 2-year study on adult English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs and practices are reported. Descriptions are provided of the nomination process for programs that teach literacy to adults not fully proficient in English, and the study site selection and case studies of nine programs are described. The programs include the following: Haitian Multi-Service Center (Dorchester, Massachusetts); Refugee Women's Alliance (Seattle, Washington); Literacy Education Action, El Paso Community College, Texas; Literacy/ESL Program, International Institute of Rhode Island; UAW (United Auto Workers)/Chrysler Tech Prep Academy (Ypsilanti, Michigan); El Barrio Popular Education Program (New York, New York); Project Workplace Literacy Partners for the Manufacturing Industry in Cook County (Illinois); Arlington Education and Employment Program (Virginia); and Lao Family Community of Minnesota, Family English Literacy Program. Study results suggest the following: (1) increased access to classes and skilled teachers; (2) comprehensive long-term planning that takes into account quality and funding cycles; (3) staff development geared to adult ESL literacy; (4) improved career paths for adult ESL literacy teachers; (5) reconciliation of the diversity of program types and approaches with funders' desire for program comparisons and accountability; (6) development of alternative assessment instruments; (7) forums for practitioners to share ideas; and (8) longitudinal research to determine which approaches work under which circumstances. (LB) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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Adult ESL Literacy Programs and Practices

A Report on a National Research Study

Technical Report

Gloria J. A. Guth

Heide Spruck Wrigley

Aguirre International
411 Borel Avenue, Suite 402
San Mateo, CA 94402

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for Adults of Limited English Proficiency

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Working Group

Dr. Elsa Auerbach	Assistant Professor, Bilingual/ESL Graduate Program, University of Massachusetts, Boston, Massachusetts
Dr. JoAnn (Jodi) Crandall	Associate Professor, Department of Education, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Baltimore, Maryland
Dr. Hanna Arlene Fingeret	Director, Literacy South, Raleigh, North Carolina
Mr. Bill Goodwin	Office of Job Training, Division of Seasonal Farmworker, Department of Labor, Washington, D.C.
Ms. Janet Isserlis	Literacy Specialist, The International Institute of Rhode Island, Providence, Rhode Island
Mr. Nick Kremer	Dean, Economic Development, Irvine Valley College, Irvine, California
Dr. Richard Levy	Supervisor, Program Development, Bureau of Adult Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Education, Quincy, Massachusetts
Dr. Lynellyn Long	Senior Social Scientist, S&T/WID, Agency for International Development, Washington, D.C.
Dr. Reynaldo Macias	Director, Center for Multilingual, Multicultural Research, School of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California
Dr. Wayne Pate	Division of Adult and Community Education, Texas Education Agency, Austin, Texas
Ms. Diane Pecoraro	Adult Education Specialist, ESL, Minnesota Department of Education, St. Paul, Minnesota
Ms. Lynn Savage	ESL Specialist, Adult Education Unit, California Department of Education, Sacramento, California
Dr. Julia Spinthourakis	Operations and Management Consultant, HRS-OSRA, Tallahassee, Florida
Mr. Dennis Terdy	Adult Learning Resource Center/The Center, Des Plaines, Illinois

U.S. Department of Education Representatives

Laura Karl Messenger	Program Manager, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Washington, D.C.
Joyce Fowlkes Campbell	Program Liaison, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, Washington, D.C.
Susan Webster	Contract Officer, Grants and Contracts Services, Washington, D.C.

Final List of Program Sites and Program Directors

El Barrio Popular Education Program, New York, NY
Dr. Klaudia Rivera

El Paso Community College, Literacy Education Action, El Paso, TX
Dr. Carol Clymer-Spradling

Haitian Multi-Service Center, Adult Basic Education Program, Dorchester, MA
Mr. Jean-Marc Jean-Baptiste, Dr. Carol A. Chandler

International Institute of Rhode Island, Literacy/ESL Program, Providence, RI
Ms. Janet Isserlis, Ms. Francine Filipek Collignon, Ms. Sara Smith

Lao Family Community of Minnesota, Family English Literacy Program, St. Paul, MN
Mr. Geoffery Blanton

Project Workplace Literacy Partners for the Manufacturing Industry in Cook County, Adult Learning Resource Center/The Center, Des Plaines, IL
Ms. Linda Mrowicki

Arlington Education and Employment Program, Wilson Adult Center, Arlington, VA
Dr. Inaam Mansoor

Refugee Women's Alliance, Seattle, WA
Ms. Judy de Barros

UAW/Chrysler Tech Prep Academy, Eastern Michigan University Corporate Services, Ypsilanti, MI
Dr. Reena Soifer, Dr. Beth Van Voorhees

Other sites visited

City College of San Francisco, Mission Campus, San Francisco, CA
Dr. Dian Verdugo

San Mateo Adult School, San Mateo, CA
Ms. Gloria Duber

YMCA Literacy School, San Francisco, CA
Ms. Nancy Larson O'Sullivan

Curriculum Writers

Anna Huerta-Macias

Peggy Dean

Deidre Freeman

Gail Weinstein-Shr

Nancy Hampson

Laima Schnell

Janet Isserlis

Lynellyn Long

Marilyn Gillespie

Pat Rigg

Maria Roddy

Celestino Cotto Medina

Executive Summary

Background

Available census reports, now over a decade old, estimate that some 4 to 6.5 million residents of the United States either speak no English or have only limited proficiency. Actual figures may be even higher. Additionally, up to 2.5 million permanent residents, most of whom are not fluent in English, may be added to the population through the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). Many of these adults have only a few years of schooling in their home countries and lack the literacy skills needed to gain employment beyond entry level jobs or to participate fully in an English speaking society. A significant percentage of these adults are not able to make normal progress in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs because they have difficulty with written language. They have been designated as "ESL literacy students."

In many areas, Adult Basic Education (ABE) and literacy programs are not equipped to meet the educational needs of these adults. Most literacy materials are designed for English speaking adults who were born in this country and are familiar with the language and culture of the U.S. Consequently, vocabulary, structure, and content may not be appropriate for adults with limited proficiency in English. ESL programs, on the other hand, have difficulty serving non-literate adults since most ESL texts assume that even beginners are literate in their native language. As a result, many ESL teachers are ill-prepared to work with students who cannot read textbooks or copy words from the blackboard.

In trying to serve adults who do not know how to read and write well in their first language, ABE and literacy programs face an additional challenge: how to deal with the great diversity of students that need help. In addition to the large numbers of Spanish or Creole speaking adults who enroll in ESL programs, there are students whose language is based on a non-alphabetic system, such as Chinese, or on a non-Roman alphabet, such as Khmer. Among the non-literate, the Hmong, who come from a culture with a recently-developed literacy tradition, present a special challenge, since they may have difficulty with the concept of print.

Practitioners, policymakers, and researchers have expressed concern about improving literacy and language learning for these adults. In response to these concerns, Congress created the **National English Literacy Demonstration Program for Adults of Limited English Proficiency** (authorized in Section 372(d) (1) of the Adult Education Act, P.L. 100-297, as amended.) Under this program, the U.S. Department of Education commissioned a national research study to "identify effective and innovative instructional approaches, methods, and technologies used to provide literacy instruction for adult English as a Second Language literacy students." The contract was awarded to Aguirre International of San Mateo, California. The study was conducted from April 1990 through May 1992.

Purpose

The study was designed to provide information and support for programs that serve adult ESL literacy students. The project produced three products to disseminate its findings: a state of the art literature review, a handbook for literacy practitioners, and a technical report describing the study and its findings.

Literature Review

Project staff completed a thorough literature review by examining reports and research literature in the areas of second language acquisition, cognitive processes, teaching ESL, literacy development, curriculum, and other related areas. The resulting paper, *Adult ESL Literacy: State of the Art 1990* will be available through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS).

Handbook

The major product of the study is the handbook for literacy practitioners, *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy*. The handbook is based on the results of this national study in which project staff identified and analyzed adult ESL literacy programs that have implemented effective and innovative practices. The handbook discusses many of the issues that shape literacy education for adults who are not yet fully proficient in English. It provides a theoretical framework for curriculum, teaching, and assessment and uses "promising practices" from the field to illustrate educationally sound approaches to ESL literacy. Curriculum modules, written by teachers for teachers, exemplify classroom practice. Also included are sections on staff development, teaching native language literacy, and integrating technology into the curriculum. *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy* is available from Aguirre International, 411 Borel Ave., Suite 402, San Mateo, CA, 94402 (415) 349-1842.

Technical Report

The technical report, *Adult ESL Literacy Programs and Practices: A Report on a National Research Study*, discusses the background of the two year study and details the project's activities. The methodology section includes descriptions of the nomination process for programs that teach literacy to adults not yet fully proficient in English, the subsequent study site selection, and the case study of nine programs. The report features full site reports for the nine innovative programs that were visited during the study. The technical report also discusses the principal findings and recommendations of the project. The technical report is available from the U.S. Department of Education.

Selected Findings and Recommendations

The most pressing needs in adult ESL literacy are the following:

1. increased access for adult ESL literacy learners facilitated by more classes and skilled teachers
2. comprehensive long-term planning that takes program quality into account and smooths out the funding cycles
3. staff development opportunities specifically geared to adult ESL literacy
4. improved career paths for adult ESL literacy teachers
5. a reconciling of the diversity of program types and approaches with funders' desire for program comparison and accountability
6. development of alternative assessment instruments because they directly affect measures of program effectiveness and accountability
7. forums for practitioners to share ideas
8. longitudinal research to determine which approaches work under which circumstances

As data for this two-year research effort on adult ESL literacy, the project staff drew upon information gathered in the literature review and summarized initially in the state of the art paper, meetings and conversations with our Working Group members, the nomination forms from the 123 sites that responded to our request for information, numerous phone calls to both practitioners and experts in the field, and three-day site visits to nine adult ESL literacy programs. Our reflections on and analysis of prior research and current practice led us to the findings and recommendations presented below. The recommendations are listed in italics after the findings. The findings and recommendations are discussed in greater detail in chapter 4 of the Technical Report.

Effective Practices

ESL literacy classes

1. The language and literacy needs of non-literate language minority adult learners are best met by ESL literacy and native language literacy classes that teach reading and writing in combination with oral language development. Neither traditional ESL classes nor literacy classes for native English speakers meet the needs of non-literate language minority adults.

    - *Programs that have non-literate language minority adult students should set up separate ESL literacy classes for them.*
    - *The Department of Education and the States should recognize that ESL programs and native-speaker literacy programs cannot automatically meet the needs of non-literate language minority adults.*
    - *The Department of Education should publicize and promote recognition of ESL literacy learners as a distinct population with particular language and literacy needs.*
    - *The Department of Education should work with States that have significant ESL populations to include in their State plans processes for identifying adult ESL literacy learners and for providing language and literacy services for them.*
    - *The Department of Education should assist States in disseminating the results of programmatic research such as New York's ethnographic study of instructional methods for non-literate language minority adults and Massachusetts' work on alternative assessments and program accountability.*

Native language literacy

2. Teaching literacy in the native language is a successful approach that is culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate for learners who are non-literate.

    - *Programs should seriously consider teaching literacy in the native language when learners come from a single language background.*

Elements of successful program models

3. The following elements, weighted differently from program to program, appear among successful program models:

   a. **learner-centeredness in language and literacy**

   The classroom practices at these programs build on the past background and experiences of the learners (including literacy experiences in their native language) and focus on their educational, social, and economic goals.

   Learner-centered programs provide environments that support learning and validate learners' life experiences in the U.S. and their native countries.

   b. **emphasis on a particular context for language and literacy rather than teaching a set of isolated skills**

   Literacy is taught as reading and writing for a purpose rather than reading and writing just for practice. The purpose may be writing a letter to a friend or to a newspaper editor, reading a note from school, writing about something that happened, or reading a production ticket or a pay stub.

   c. **meaning-based literacy teaching**

   Approaches that are meaning-based, rather than those with a narrow skills-based focus, are emerging as the predominant way for teaching adult ESL literacy learners. At the same time, multi-faceted approaches to teaching language and literacy are the norm among adult ESL literacy programs; for example, programs may combine aspects of the problem-posing and competency-based approaches or the whole language and communicative approaches.

   d. **curriculum that is shaped by teachers' and learners' input**

   Adult ESL literacy curricula are being opened up in new ways, and we find both ***pre-specified curricula*** in which, for example, competencies may be determined before classes begin and ***emergent curricula*** in which curriculum topics are negotiated between teacher and learners.

   e. **integration of the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening)**

   ESL literacy classes often emphasize communication, and successful program models will employ, even at the beginning levels, speaking, listening, reading, and writing in every class.

f. **knowledge of and input from the community of the learners**

Successful models for community input include employing members of the learners' community on the staff and seeking their advice, having an advisory board composed of members of the community, and giving the learners themselves a voice in curriculum content and program operation.

g. **a focus on cross-cultural issues and skills**

Language minority adults typically bring to class a wealth of experience in a culture other than the dominant U.S. culture. Successful program models make use of the varied experiences of the members of the class to compare and contrast customs and skills in the countries from which the learners come.

- *Federal, State, and private funders should establish program guidelines that support educationally sound programs that provide a meaningful context for literacy development, generate reading and writing activities based on the learners' background and experiences, and link language and literacy to learners' lives outside the classroom.*
- *Regardless of which approach or combination of approaches are used, adult ESL literacy programs should ensure that their program and classes are learner-centered and context-sensitive.*
- *Programs should move away from teaching narrowly-defined and isolated skills in their literacy classes and move towards employing meaningful literacy activities.*
- *Programs, including those with a mandated curriculum, should employ strategies for discovering what the learners' needs and interests are and incorporating them into the curriculum. Guidelines from funders and policymakers should explicitly acknowledge that programs need to listen to learners.*
- *Federal and state policymakers should reward program quality and encourage flexibility in program approaches, as long as they are learner-centered and context-sensitive. Local programs should determine what approaches or combination of approaches respond best to the needs of their specific population of learners and the strengths of their teachers.*

Program Models

4. Diversity is the hallmark of adult ESL literacy programs and no single model appears to meet the needs of all learners.

   It is an asset to the field not to be limited to one ideal model or one prescribed way of providing literacy education since it allows models to be context-sensitive and responsive to the needs of the learners.

   For example, what works for Hmong refugees in Minnesota (family literacy with an emphasis on interacting with the school system) may not be appropriate for Mexican-born residents of El Paso who are Spanish-speakers familiar with American culture. Similarly, language minority workers in manufacturing plants in Chicago may have different language and literacy needs from refugee women in Seattle.

   The challenge for adult ESL literacy, and indeed for all of adult education, is to preserve flexibility while encouraging educationally sound teaching methods and accountability.

   - *Federal and State policymakers should continue to fund this diversity of programs since a number of models offer innovative and effective program designs and approaches to teaching adult ESL literacy.*

Program components

5. Research shows that good adult education programs possess the following eight components: **community outreach, needs assessment of the learner community, program design, curriculum, approaches and methods, initial assessment and progress evaluation, staff development, and support services.**

   Yet no adult ESL literacy program that participated in this study, even the most successful, was uniformly excellent on all eight program components.

   - *When proposing quality indicators or program standards, policymakers should be cognizant that even good programs may not have resources to excel simultaneously in all aspects of program development*
   - *Programs can use these eight components as an organizing principle for a self-evaluation to determine if they are making appropriate efforts in each of the eight areas.*

- *Programs can use the explanatory material and interview guides in the appendices of the project's technical report, Adult ESL Literacy Programs and Practices: A Report on a National Research Study, to guide staff development and program improvement related to the eight program components.*

Program Staffing

Teacher Qualifications

6. Many in the adult ESL literacy field would like to see qualified teachers who possess both background in relevant theory and teaching practice as well as in-depth knowledge of the communities they will serve. Given that not all teachers possess both strengths, some community-oriented programs put primary emphasis on bilingual capability and knowledge of the learner community.

- *Any attempt to require uniformity of qualifications for ESL literacy teaching staff must be accompanied by enough resources to provide the necessary training in educational theory and teaching and in understanding learners' communities.*

- *The field should engage in a robust discussion of how to professionalize the teaching of adult ESL literacy including teacher qualifications, program staffing structures, and salaries.*

Staffing Patterns

7. Most adult ESL literacy programs depend on part-time teachers who often are underpaid and overworked, who lack job security, and who do not get benefits. Although programs and individuals can adapt on a short-term basis, the long-term implications of part-time staffing are that staff are subject to burn-out, the field loses good teachers and program directors, and it is difficult to recruit talented people into the profession.

- *More funding is needed at all levels for adult ESL literacy classes and teachers. In particular, funding should be made available for staff and teacher salaries and benefits.*
- *Funders should help to professionalize the field by funding full-time teacher positions.*

Program Leadership

8. A number of programs benefit from the presence of one guiding light (usually the program director) with a vision of what the program could be and a dedication to getting the resources to do it. Yet some of these same individuals that give programs their vitality are close to burn-out as a result of their efforts to provide consistent programming under severe funding constraints.

- *Funding cycles for adult ESL literacy programs must be lengthened so less program time and fewer resources are spent searching for money and comprehensive long-term services can be planned.*
- *Funders should work with programs to ensure that administrative expenses such as insurance and the cost of fiscal management are properly supported.*

Staff Development

Program-based staff development

9. Program-based staff development, in which teaching staff participate in training aimed at the particular needs of their own program, rather than at general ESL literacy teaching techniques is an element of most successful program models.

Such staff development is dependent on having access to the needed ESL literacy teaching expertise.

- *In order to maintain internal coherence in terms of teaching at the program, programs should provide staff development specifically geared to their context, philosophy, and teaching approaches.*

Adult ESL literacy theory and practice

10. Many teachers at adult ESL literacy programs have not had specific training or experience in teaching adult ESL literacy.

    - *Programs and funders should provide special staff development for teachers in the theory and practice of adult ESL literacy such as introducing literacy to pre-literate and non-literate learners, teaching in a multilevel classroom, assessing ESL literacy learners' progress, determining the roles of phonics and error correction, and linking learners' backgrounds to classroom activities.*
    - *Programs should use the third sections of the chapters of the project's handbook, Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy, to facilitate staff development on particular topics such as teaching approaches, curriculum, and native language literacy.*
    - *The Department of Education should provide leadership for the field by developing a program of technical assistance aimed specifically at teaching adult ESL literacy.*
    - *States with significant ESL populations should use some of their Section 353 staff development funds, available under the Adult Education Act, for ESL literacy staff development.*

Forums for Practitioners

11. ESL literacy practitioners are eager to share what they have learned from practice and want to find out more about theory and "best practices," yet many feel isolated and the field is hampered by a lack of vehicles for communication.

- *Forums focusing on relating ESL literacy research and practice, such as those sponsored by the Literacy Assistance Center in New York, should be fostered by professional organizations and State and local funders.*

Assessment

Assessment of Learner Progress

12. Assessment of learner progress is one of the areas most in flux among ESL literacy programs as programs, funders, and policymakers try to balance demands for tests that can be used to compare programs with calls to keep learner assessments program-based and learner-centered.

Many funders require programs to use some form of standardized test. However, these standardized learner assessments are not sensitive enough to pick up the incremental gains of non-native speakers just becoming literate in English, and standardized tests rarely map well onto the curriculum that is taught. As a result, programs expend additional resources to create their own assessments of learner progress for internal program use.

- *Funders that require standardized tests should re-evaluate that mandate. Funders should take care to verify that the test being used is designed to measure what they want to measure and that it is appropriate for the population in question.*
- *Programs should advocate for better and more relevant tests while, at the same time, instituting alternative assessments that are more learner-centered and more reflective of the curriculum actually being taught.*
- *Policymakers and program directors need to support staff development efforts that (1) focus on helping teachers develop assessments that document the gains that students are making in acquiring greater literacy and (2) help train teachers in how to use the new assessments in ways that are valid and reliable.*

Program effectiveness

13. Adult ESL literacy programs collect evidence of individual student progress (e.g., portfolios of learner writing, literacy behavior inventories, program-based tests, competency-based checklists, standardized tests), but there is a need to

develop systems for analyzing and summarizing that data to show overall program effectiveness.

The very diversity that encourages program flexibility also makes it difficult for policymakers to compare programs and learner outcomes across literacy levels, program types, and teaching approaches.

- *Congress should fund and the Department of Education should initiate longitudinal research studies of program participants within different types of adult ESL literacy programs.*
- *Research is needed on what are realistic expectations for learners both to acquire literacy and to learn English as a Second Language.*
- *Since non-traditional providers such as community-based organizations (CBOs) exhibit promising practices in teaching adult ESL literacy and can now qualify for "direct and equitable access" to Federal adult education funding under the National Literacy Act, the Department of Education should include CBOs in any proposed research.*
- *The Department of Education should sponsor a program of research, hearings, or meetings aimed at discovering what adult ESL literacy programs (administrators, teachers, learners) consider meaningful evidence of program effectiveness and integrating those views with the needs and concerns of funders.*
- *Programs should have a process for setting program goals and a plan for attaining those goals against which their effectiveness could be judged.*

Support Services

14. For many learners, support services are critical determinants of whether they can participate in an ESL literacy program. Helping learners overcome barriers to participation in the program typically involves improving accessibility and providing support services such as childcare, transportation, counseling, and job referral.

- *At regular intervals, programs should make a systematic effort to discover what support services will facilitate access to the program and which will be most useful to their learners.*

- *Funders should consider support services as integral parts of adult ESL literacy programs.*

- *Programs should think creatively about support services since not all solutions require a lot of money. For example, learners in one program set up a cooperative childcare arrangement. Negotiating "student rates" on public transportation for the adult learners worked at another program.*

Technology

15. Although many sites have access to technology, most still lack expertise in how to integrate the technology into their curriculum.

ESL literacy programs that use technology (computers and video) are still largely experimenting with how to use it either to support aspects of language and literacy education and/or to expose learners to using technology itself.

- *The Department of Education should fund three parallel efforts in research and dissemination:*

  (1) a Best Practices series on ways in which video, audio, and computers are currently being used to support language acquisition and learning, learning about technology, and teaching.

  (2) a Look Ahead series that would feature papers by experts on how particular "cutting edge" technology could be applied to adult ESL literacy.

  (3) a consumer series that would gather reviews of software from the adult ESL literacy perspective and give some suggestion about what programs can do with current software.

- *Policymakers should facilitate staff development for adult ESL literacy program staff in the area of technology.*

- *The field should engage in an informed discussion of the roles computers can and should play in teaching language and literacy to non-literate language minority adults.*

- *There is currently very little software designed for adult ESL literacy learners. The Department of Education should fund several demonstration technology partnerships between teachers with experience in the ESL literacy classroom and appropriate software developers, programmers, and* *video technologists.*

- *The Department of Education should fund research to investigate the use of technology as a magnet to attract adult ESL literacy students and keep them in class. This research would explore perceived and actual links with real-world jobs and measure enhancements to self-esteem from students' exposure to technology.*

Funding

16. A lack of funding adversely affects the quality of many adult ESL literacy programs.

Some adult ESL literacy programs have developed effective strategies for coping with funding vagaries by utilizing multiple sources of funding and diversifying their literacy strands.

- *The Department of Education should work with States and other funders to streamline the reporting requirements for various categories of literacy funding, so that bookkeeping tasks do not swamp programs.*
- *The Department of Education should play a leadership role in helping States and direct service providers to provide comprehensive long-term services.*
- *Both Federal and State policymakers must build in funding incentives that reward program quality. The perceived capriciousness of some funding decisions (the unannounced use of different criteria from one year to the next, across the board cuts that do not take need or quality into account, systems that pit good programs against one another in the search for funding) is a detriment to the delivery of quality services.*

Population Served

17. The field of adult ESL literacy needs accurate estimates of the number of adults who are currently receiving ESL literacy services (from all sources), the number of adults who need such services but are not being served, and the number of ESL literacy programs.

State and Federal policymakers and ESL literacy providers need accurate numbers in order to design appropriate education programs and to provide adequate access for non-literate limited-English proficient (LEP) adults.

- *The Department of Education should work with relevant public departments and agencies and private organizations to develop a plan to estimate the number of programs currently providing adult ESL literacy services and the number of literacy students they serve.*

- *The Department of Education should work with the staffs of the National Adult Literacy Survey and the Bureau of the Census to generate estimates of the number of residents needing adult ESL literacy services and not being served.*

Part I: Report on Research

Chapter 1

Introduction and Study Purpose

Background Demographics

Immigration has been a major feature of U.S. population growth in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since 1960, immigration has shifted away from European immigration to immigration from Latin America and Asia, and the same period has seen the emergence of undocumented immigration.[1] Findings from the 1982 English Language Proficiency Study suggested that, within the U.S. population, there were 17-20 million adults who were found to be functionally illiterate in English. Using these data, the Clearinghouse for Literacy Education has recently estimated that 7 million of these adults (more than a third) spoke a language other than English at home.[2] Additionally, up to 2.5 million permanent residents, most of whom were not fluent in English, were added to the population during the 1980s through the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). California estimates that over 1.6 million newly legalized persons are eligible for permanent residency under IRCA. Over one-third of this population is not literate in their native language.[3] Over 80% of this population is functioning at a level which indicates that they have not mastered the educational skills normally associated with the first six years of school.[4]

The immigrants of the 1980s included more rural villagers and persons with little education than did the immigrants of the 1970s. This change in the composition of the immigration pool is reflected in the dramatic increase from 1979 to 1989 in the number of residents who speak a language other than English at home. Using data from the Current Population Survey, researchers report that the number of home speakers of non-English languages, which includes many, but not all, limited English proficient residents, grew from slightly more that 17.5 million

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[1] See Karen A. Woodrow, *Undocumented immigrants living in the United States* (Paper presented at the meeting of the American Statistical Association of America, Anaheim, California, 1990, August).

[2] See "Issues in literacy education," *NCLE Notes* 1 (1) (April 1991): 1 (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education. See also Dorothy Waggoner's caveat about using any numbers from the ELPS in "Linguistic minorities and limited-English-proficient people in the United States: Will we be ready to use the 1990 Census information?" *Number and Needs* 1 (1) (May-June 1991): 4.

[3] See Richard Stiles, "California amnesty education update," *Amnesty Education Newsletter* 1 (5) (1990): 1, 5. (Sacramento, CA: California Community Colleges, Amnesty Education Office).

[4] See *Impact of Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) legislation on adult literacy in California. California Education Summit, December 12-13, 1989.* (Sacramento: California State Department of Education, Migrant and Amnesty Education Division, Amnesty Education Office, 1989).

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in 1979 to almost 25 million in 1989, showing a rate of growth of 40.9% in a single decade.[5]

What none of these numbers tell us is how many of these limited-English-proficient residents were or are not literate in any language. There is a confusion between lack of literacy in English and total lack of literacy especially when illiteracy is discussed. One researcher suggests that "... no common survey definitions include literacy in languages other than English. Thus, literacy is confused with English literacy, and illiteracy is confounded with non-English literacy." [6]

What we do know is that many (if not most) of these adults have had few years of schooling in their home countries and have typically lacked the literacy skills needed to gain employment beyond entry level jobs or to participate fully in an English speaking society. A significant percentage of these adults are not able to make normal progress in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs because they have difficulty with written language. They have been designated as "ESL literacy students".

In many areas, Adult Basic Education (ABE) and literacy programs are not equipped to meet the educational needs of these adults. Most literacy materials are designed for English speaking adults who were born in this country and are familiar with the language and culture of the U.S. Consequently, vocabulary, structure, and content may not be appropriate for adults with limited proficiency in English. ESL programs, on the other hand, have difficulty serving non-literate adults since most ESL texts assume that even beginners are literate in their native language. As a result, many ESL teachers are ill-prepared to deal with students who cannot read textbooks or copy words from the blackboard.[7]

In trying to serve adults who do not know how to read and write well in their first language, ABE and literacy programs face an additional challenge: how to deal with the great diversity of students that need help. In addition to the large numbers of Spanish or Creole speaking adults who enroll in ESL programs, there are students whose language is based on a non-alphabetic system, such as Chinese, or on a non-Roman alphabet, such as Khmer. Among the non-literate, the Hmong, who come from a culture with a limited literacy tradition, present a special challenge, since they may have difficulty grasping the very concept of print.

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[5] 19.5 million were adults. See Dorothy Waggoner, "Numbers of home speakers of non-English languages increasing," *Numbers and Needs* 2 (1) (January 1992): 2.

[6] Terrence G. Wiley, Disembedding Chicano literacy: The need for group-specific approaches to adult literacy. *Stanislaus, Journal of the School of Education* (Long Beach: California State University, in press).

[7] For program year 1988-1989, more than 1 in 3 of participants receiving educational services under the Adult Education Act was enrolled in ESL (1,121,704 out of 3,257,982). How many of these ESL learners might have been ESL literacy learners is unknown. See *Teaching adults with limited English skills: Progress and challenges.* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, 1991).

National English Literacy Demonstration Program for Adults of Limited English Proficiency

To date, there has been no consensus on how best to serve the basic language and literacy needs of the ESL literacy students, and, until now, there have been no national studies identifying successful programs or documenting promising practices. Yet practitioners, policymakers, and researchers expressed concerns about improving literacy and language learning for these adults. In response to these concerns, Congress created the **National English Literacy Demonstration Program for Adults of Limited English Proficiency** (authorized in Section 372(d) (1) of the Adult Education Act, P.L. 100-297, as amended.) Under this program, the U.S. Department of Education commissioned the national research study described in this technical report.

Study Purpose

The study was designed to identify and analyze the characteristics of educationally sound adult ESL literacy programs. We sought to understand and describe what innovative or effective programs do to foster literacy development for non-literate language minority adults, what teachers and program directors need to know in order to teach ESL literacy, and, in general, what makes a good program work well. We put particular emphasis on learning about teaching and documenting the "best practices" at various sites and the contexts in which they occurred.

There were five project goals:

i. to delineate the state-of-the-art knowledge of adult ESL literacy through a review of current literature

ii. to develop a framework for examining adult ESL literacy programs that was based on the current research literature

iii. to identify and describe "effective and innovative" programs and promising practices in the field of adult ESL literacy

iv. to aid teachers and program directors by writing and publishing a handbook for instructing adult ESL literacy learners

v. to inform policymakers and researchers about the current status and needs of the adult ESL literacy field

In meeting these goals, we gained a national perspective from the members of our Working Group who assisted us by identifying relevant sources of information, providing advice on research issues, suggesting possible sites to be visited as part of the research, and responding to our questions on adult ESL literacy programs and practices.

The research study has generated three major products: a state of the art paper based on the relevant research literature, a handbook for adult ESL literacy practitioners, and this technical report detailing the methodology, site visit reports, and findings and recommendations of the project. The handbook and technical report are companion pieces and should be read in tandem to view a comprehensive picture not only of what the project has accomplished but also of the latest thinking in the adult ESL literacy field.[1]

Overview of Adult ESL Literacy

Adult ESL literacy is a relatively new field that borrows from a number of related disciplines. To develop a framework for adult ESL literacy, practitioners and researchers have borrowed from many fields including adult learning theory, ESL methodology, sociolinguistics, cognitive psychology, anthropology, educational linguistics, and literacy theory and practice (whole language approaches, the Language Experience Approach, Freirean pedagogy), among others.

In fact, adult ESL literacy is just now coalescing as a field linking research and practice. For example, when we began this project in the spring of 1990, there were very few publications that dealt directly with the field of ESL literacy. During the life of the project, a number of new book-length works of direct interest to ESL literacy practitioners were published. These included *Making Meaning/Making Change* by Elsa Roberts Auerbach; *A Handbook for Practitioners: ESL/literacy for adult non-native speakers of English* by Francine Filipek Collignon, Janet Isserlis, and Sara Smith of the International Institute of Rhode Island; and an entire issue of *TESL Talk* devoted to issues in adult ESL literacy.

At present, there is no one widely accepted definition of adult ESL literacy or, for that matter, of literacy itself. Operationally, some programs define ESL literacy within the larger contexts of their learners' abilities and/or the curriculum process they implement.

Definitions of literacy

Underlying any discussion of adult ESL literacy is the range of understandings of what literacy itself means. There appears to be some consensus that there is not just one literacy, per se, but rather a plurality of literacies — different literacies for differing contexts. The debate over what counts as literacy is an ongoing and often healthy one. Presently, one widely accepted definition, developed for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 1985 and adopted by the National Adult Literacy Survey project in 1990, is

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[1] For the literature review, see Heide Spruck Wrigley and Gloria J. A. Guth, *Adult ESL Literacy: State of the Art 1990* (San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International, 1990), to be made available through ERIC. For the handbook, see Heide Spruck Wrigley and Gloria J. A. Guth, *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy*, (San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International, 1992), available from Aguirre International.

> Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.[9]

This definition can be understood in the context of three scales representing distinct aspects of literacy: prose literacy, document literacy, and quantitative literacy.

The National Literacy Act of 1991 (P.L. 102-73) adds references to the English language, to solving problems, and to functioning on the job in its definition of literacy as

> an individual's ability to read, write and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential.

Regardless of the literacy definition they choose, most researchers and practitioners can agree that literacy is about reading and writing and using language and the printed word. However, there is further controversy over the uses and contexts of literacy. Acquiring literacy is sometimes seen as a step function: reach the plateau of being literate and you possess a tool for all seasons, for all occasions, for all jobs. Others see literacy in the context of social practices or of culture. Still others see literacy as a facilitator of a critical examination of the circumstances of one's own life.[10]

Definitions of adult ESL literacy

Different, but not mutually exclusive, perspectives on adult ESL literacy can be elucidated by focusing on the attributes of ESL literacy students:

- From the perspective of a provider of a full range of ESL classes, ESL literacy students may be those who are not able to make normal progress in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes because they have difficulty with written language.

- From the viewpoint of an employer, adult ESL literacy students may be language minority employees whose communication skills in English need to improve to facilitate communication on the job, to enhance job performance, to facilitate promotability, or to ensure participation in new initiatives such as Total Quality Management (TQM).

- From the viewpoint of a community educator, ESL literacy students may be those who cannot read and write in their native language or in English and whose higher order thinking skills can be developed by a critical examination of issues in their own community.

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[9] National Adult Literacy Survey brochure (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, n.d. [1990]).

[10] For an overview of literacy definitions, see JoAnn (Jodi) Crandall, "Adult Literacy Development," *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 12 (1992), 86-104.

Adult ESL literacy students include those who do not speak English or have only limited proficiency as well as others whose oral proficiency in English may differ from their abilities to read and write. Usually these learners have had six or fewer years of schooling in their native country. Simple categories cannot convey the complexity of learners' backgrounds and language and literacy goals. For example, an ESL learner from Laos who is literate in her native language might be classified as an ESL literacy student because acquiring English literacy means that she must learn to read and write using the Roman alphabet. Another ESL literacy student who cannot read and write might have the goal of becoming biliterate, that is, learning to read and write in two languages.

Working definition of teaching ESL literacy

Rather than develop a definition of ESL literacy itself, our project focused on the goals of many of the literacy programs we studied and developed a working definition that teaching ESL literacy might mean

> supporting language minority adults who are not yet proficient in English and who have had very little formal education in their efforts to understand and use English in its many forms (including prose, document, and quantitative), in a variety of contexts (family, community, school, work), so that they can reach their fullest potential and achieve their own goals (personal, professional, and academic).

Adult ESL Literacy Programs

ESL literacy programs are programs (or sections of programs) that put a special emphasis on developing the literacy skills (reading, writing, and cognitive development) of adults who have limited proficiency in English. Beginning literacy skills may be developed either in English or in the native language. The primary focus of ESL literacy programs is on enabling students to use literacy effectively in their lives (e.g., to read with their children, to understand notices and signs, and to write down their thoughts and ideas). Typically, ESL literacy programs also include an oral language component to help learners develop their overall proficiency in English.

Adult ESL Literacy Students

ESL literacy programs typically serve adults who are not native speakers of English and who want or need to develop their reading and writing skills. These learners often have had very little experience of schooling in their home countries, and they therefore may need special support before they can succeed in a formal learning environment.

ESL literacy learners generally

- have not yet learned to read and write in English although they may have some proficiency in spoken English and may have developed excellent functional "survival skills."
- tend to have had few years of formal schooling and may be reluctant to enter or re-enter conventional schools.
- have had limited opportunities to acquire literacy in their native countries and thus may not be literate in their native languages. Some learners may have strong coping skills and a social network that allows them to function quite well without much knowledge of print.

To a lesser extent, ESL literacy programs also serve students who

- have received some formal education in their native countries but have had little experience using the Roman alphabet.
- are able to understand most spoken English and communicate face to face quite well but need additional opportunities to develop their reading and writing skills.

Students in an adult ESL literacy class can range from a Latvian with at least a high school education but no familiarity with the Roman alphabet to an Eritrean who has never been to school and cannot read or write. However, ESL literacy students are not all new immigrants: some learners may have lived in the U.S. for ten or more years without learning to speak English, let alone read and write in English. As a result, many classes include students who are familiar with U.S. culture, as well as others who are new to the country.

Like adults everywhere, ESL literacy learners have other distinguishing characteristics than their educational backgrounds and their desire to learn to read and write in English. ESL literacy learners are old and young, parents and grandparents, they hold jobs or want to get jobs, they have often encountered great personal hardship in coming to the U.S., they tell funny stories, they have opinions, they are eager to learn.

Students have clear goals for wanting to become literate in their native language or in English:

- "If you go to the welfare office and say you don't speak English, they hand you something written in Spanish. But if you can't read Spanish, then you still don't know."
- If you can read and write in English, you don't have to bring someone else along to the doctor's office to read and fill out the forms they give you.
- You can be more involved in your children's education if you can read the notes they bring home from school.
- You are able to say "you're wrong" to a clerk who tries to charge you $20 for a dozen eggs.

In the pages that follow, we will highlight the factors that allow good programs to support learners in their quest to acquire language and literacy.

Chapter 2 of this technical report describes in detail the steps taken to meet the two project goals of delineating the state-of-the-art knowledge and developing a framework for examining adult ESL literacy programs, which together were the primary research activities of the project. Results from the nomination phase of that research are reported in chapter 3 and from the case study phase in the site reports in Part II of this report. Chapter 4 of this report presents findings and recommendations for policymakers, researchers, and program staff.

Chapter 2

Research Design and Methods

The goal of the research component of this project was to examine and describe high-quality adult ESL literacy programs. To this end, we first obtained information about a large number of programs nominated as exemplary, and then we selected nine of the nominated programs for case study. The first set of information provides quantitative descriptions of a wide range of programs perceived by experts and practitioners to be of high quality. The case studies provide in-depth, qualitative descriptions of educationally-sound successful programs. Together, these two types of information give us a view of the current state-of-the-art in adult ESL literacy practice.

Framework for Program Assessment

The project's review of the literature suggested to us eight program components that good adult education programs might possess.[1] We adapted these eight components to an ESL literacy context to form a framework against which we could evaluate programs. This framework was the basis for assessing nominated programs and for the data collection for the case studies.

A list of the components follows with examples of strong and innovative practices for each:

1. Community Outreach

Strong community outreach includes efforts to represent the program in culturally appropriate ways to the community of the learners, to reduce barriers to participation, and to facilitate access to the program. Such outreach also encompasses linkages with social service agencies, employers, other educational institutions, and vocational or training programs.

> **Examples of Innovation:** Innovative efforts might include various ways of generating interest in the literacy program, such as asking members of the learners' community to visit neighborhood churches and synagogues, clinics, housing projects, schools, union halls, and other centers where adults may gather. Innovative outreach may also provide literacy education at sites where adults live or work, e.g., through home tutoring or mobile literacy classrooms.

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[1] Heide Spruck Wrigley and Gloria J. A. Guth, *Adult ESL Literacy: State of the Art 1990* (San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International, 1990). Will be available through ERIC.

2. Needs Assessment

A strong needs assessment helps identify both the needs of the larger community and the literacy goals of the individual learners. Such a needs assessment includes information on the changes taking place in the community (demographics, employment opportunities, and emerging social and political issues), as well as information about the educational, language, and cultural backgrounds of the learners. A needs assessments can also include ongoing efforts to help learners articulate their aims and assist them in setting realistic goals with respect to literacy.

Examples of Innovation: An innovative needs assessment calls for active involvement of the learners, teachers, and community leaders in planning and implementing the program. It could include periodic group sessions with the learners to discuss not only their immediate literacy needs but also their progress toward long-term goals. In workplace programs, such an assessment would involve workers, teachers, supervisors, and managers in discussing literacy practices at the work site, needs of the company, and goals of individual workers.

3. Program Design

A strong program design clearly articulates the goals of the program in terms of literacy and links all components to these goals. Such a design should contain enough flexibility to allow the program to respond to the changing literacy needs of students. A program that has a mandated curriculum should show how it negotiates between the requirements of the funding source (e.g., achievement of competencies) and the special literacy needs and goals of the learners.

Examples of Innovation: An innovative program design might be based on a working definition of literacy developed through collaborative efforts. All major aspects of the program would reflect both the educational philosophy and the goals of the program. Innovative designs include those in which a committee of student or worker delegates participate in collective problem solving and policy making. Such a design might also explicitly link community resources with the curriculum.

Innovative efforts may include native language support in significant aspects of the program (e.g., teaching initial literacy in the first language, using a bilingual approach in teaching English literacy, or employing bilingual aides to facilitate collaboration between teachers and students).

4. Curriculum

A strong curriculum acts as a conceptual framework that (1) outlines the kinds of literacy the program wants to emphasize (e.g., prose literacy, document literacy, functional literacy); (2) suggests approaches, methods, and materials; and (3) links classroom teaching at the various levels with assessment and evaluation. Within the agreed-upon framework for literacy education, there should be flexibility to allow for a variety of approaches that can respond to differing student needs and varying teacher preferences.

> **Examples of Innovation:** Innovative efforts may include ways of focusing on the cognitive and creative aspects of literacy or developing an emphasis on the relationship between literacy and the socio-cultural context of students' lives. Innovation may also include the following: (1) integrating task-based or competency-based literacy with prose literacy, (2) enabling students to maintain the literacy traditions of their community, (3) using content information to increase the learners' background knowledge, and (4) emphasizing reading and writing strategies, not just skills. Innovative curricula in the workplace might combine task-based literacy with activities that foster "learning how to learn," include discussion of workers' rights, and provide opportunities for learners to work towards more personal literacy goals.

5. Approaches and Methods

Strong ESL literacy approaches and methods focus primarily on literacy use in both reading and writing (not just reading or writing practice) and reflect current knowledge of how adults with limited proficiency in English can learn to read and write while continuing to develop their oral skills.

Educational materials should familiarize learners with the various forms, functions, and uses of literacy. Activities and texts should validate and reflect the experiences and literacy practices of the learners and at the same time help them to connect their personal stories to the experiences and literacy practices of others.

> **Examples of Innovation:** Innovative approaches and methods might include having students read, write, and "publish" complete texts such as simple class newspapers, stories, or letters to people outside of the classroom. Students could work in teams to gather written information on topics of interest to them (e.g., AIDS, crime prevention, bilingual hotlines, tenant rights) and to share their findings with others. At the very beginning levels (initial literacy), innovative approaches might start with environmental print activities, such as working with captioned pictures, labels, posters, and signs familiar to students.
>
> At the workplace, innovative approaches might include strategies for coping with new technology at work, at home, and in the community (e.g., how to interpret phone bills, program a VCR, or use an automated phone system).

6. Initial Assessment and Progress Evaluation

A strong initial assessment (diagnostic testing) helps determine what learners can and cannot do with respect to reading and writing. The assessment should show (1) how familiar students are with literacy in their native language, (2) how strong they are in English literacy, and (3) how well they can understand and express themselves in spoken English. Progress evaluation of students should provide evidence of student literacy gains as witnessed by teachers and experienced by the learners and should be capable of providing information requested by funding sources and other stakeholders.

> **Examples of Innovation:** Innovative assessments may involve practices such as: (1) creative ways of combining mandated tests with program-based assessments; (2) guidelines, evaluation forms, and materials that allow teachers and counselors to assess the literacy skills and educational background of learners in a systematic way; and (3) a framework for having learners decide what they want to read and write to demonstrate their literacy skills. Innovative progress evaluations may also include observation guides that help teachers document qualitative changes in students' literacy behavior.

7. Staff Development

Strong staff development efforts foster collaboration among the staff and help teachers, tutors, and aides to expand their instructional repertoire. It can encourage teachers to reflect on the way they teach and to seek input from peers and other professionals. Strong staff development efforts also seek to build on the rich and varied experiences of staff members and teachers, especially those who come from the learners' community, and provide teachers with access to a wider network of ideas and practices.

> **Examples of Innovation:** Innovative staff development efforts may include incentives or release time for teachers who want to develop lessons and create literacy materials that better meet the needs of students. In some instances, innovative staff development might mean helping teachers and tutors to move beyond old perceptions and adopt new strategies for teaching reading and writing to language minority adults. In general, innovative staff development regards literacy teachers as professional educators and supports and rewards their efforts accordingly.

8. Support Services

Strong support services help reduce barriers to program participation. They may include services such as bilingual assistance, child care and/or transportation stipends, personal and educational counseling, and referrals to community resources. In the case of workplace literacy projects, strong support services may be evidenced by paid release time from work or incentives for participating in the program.

> **Examples of Innovation:** Innovative support services may include linkages with community organizations that will provide services and information onsite (e.g., vision screening, legal advice, or AIDS counseling). It may also involve outreach workers from the community who will be available to interpret and translate important documents for learners and bilingual aides who can facilitate communication with various bureaucratic agencies.

Nomination Process

The goal of this first phase of research was to identify adult ESL literacy programs from across the nation that were effective or innovative and that represented the diversity found among ESL literacy service providers. Nominations were solicited directly from the 50 State Directors of adult education; state ESL Specialists in all states having them; members of the project's Working Group; experts in the fields of ESL, literacy, and adult education; and program directors of adult ESL literacy programs that were known to us or that contacted us. In addition, announcements of the nomination process appeared in national literacy newsletters and in state TESOL newsletters. Every individual and program that requested to be included in the process was sent a packet of nomination materials.

The nomination packets contained an eight-page set of background materials and a nomination form. The purpose of the background materials was to enable programs to decide if they met the project's criteria for nomination. To this end, they included the descriptions of the eight program components with examples of effective and innovative programs and other explanatory information to clarify what we meant by such phrases as "ESL literacy." This information, presented in the form of questions and answers, described some of the characteristics of ESL literacy programs and the type of program in which the project was interested. Nominated programs could include any ESL literacy program that (1) served Limited English Proficient (LEP) adults, (2) integrated literacy with oral language development, and (3) put **a special emphasis on teaching reading and writing in context.** We sought nominations of several categories of programs: those that were strong in all facets of teaching and program structure, those that considered themselves particularly strong in several program components, and/or those that were innovative in one or two aspects of ESL literacy. Appendix A gives the full text of the background materials.

Programs nominated themselves by completing nomination forms designed by the project. We developed nomination forms to ensure that similar information would be provided for each nominated program. The questions on the nomination form were designed both to gather background information (number of literacy students, funding sources, program setting) and to focus on ESL literacy directly (program type, program goals, levels of literacy, assessment, teaching approaches). Program staff were asked to discuss their program in terms of the eight components that were the project's framework for program assessment. Nominated programs were also asked to indicate what evidence they used to demonstrate program effectiveness. (See the nomination form in Appendix B.)

In November and December 1990, we sent over 400 nomination packets to individuals and programs. By the deadline for the receipt of nominations at the end of January 1991, we had received 123 completed nomination forms. Chapter 3 summarizes the information provided in those forms.

Case Study Process

For the in-depth examination of programs, we elected to take a qualitative, case study approach. It was our goal at this research phase to develop rich descriptions of individual programs as viewed by multiple participants at each site.[2] We believed a qualitative approach would help us link teaching approaches with the program context (design, philosophy, curriculum) via the perspectives of administrators, teachers, and learners. Qualitative methods are designed to produce a wealth of detailed information from which researchers can generate categories and patterns that describe relationships.[3]

Our goal was to look for evidence in the field of what the current literature indicated was important for teaching literacy to non-native speakers of English who have minimal literacy skills. Site visit information was collected both to influence the adult ESL literacy field by illustrating promising practices and to reflect the field in terms of the diversity of programs, approaches, and student characteristics. Sites were selected because they showed innovation in the provision of services to ESL literacy learners and because, in our judgment, they had something to contribute to the field of adult ESL literacy.

For this case study part of the research, we used a number of methods to ensure that we collected valid and reliable data: we triangulated data across different members of the program staff and learners and different types of data sources; two researchers participated in the interviews and observations at each of the sites; and these two researchers developed similar philosophies of data collection through training with an expert in qualitative studies and through an analysis of case study methodology.[4]

Because of our charge "to identify effective and innovative *instructional* approaches, methods, and technologies [italics added]," the researchers put more emphasis on learning about teaching in the ESL literacy classroom than on other aspects of the program such as administration or support services. In particular, we were interested in documenting the "best practices" at that site and the context in which they occurred.

The data collection and observations of the case study were guided by the framework of the eight components crossed with key themes that we isolated from the research literature (see Table 1). As appropriate, we asked questions designed to elicit information about these themes for each component. We also asked global questions of the program staff that allowed them to look across their program components using these analytical categories.[5] The themes were integration (feedback across components); collaboration (between the program and outside agencies, teachers, students); effectiveness (documentation; how do they evaluate whether something is working?); learner-centeredness; reducing student barriers; innovation (especially as it relates to replicability/uniqueness); and response to context (flexibility of response; diversity of students and teachers). In addition, we were interested in the constraints under which the program was operating and who was involved in the program and how.

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[2] Hanna Arlene Fingeret and Susan Tuck Danin, *They Really Put a Hurtin' on my Brain: Learning in Literacy Volunteers of New York City* (Durham, NC: Literacy South, 1991).

[3] Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd ed. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990). See also Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1984).

[4] For the latter, see Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Revised ed. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989).

Table 1
Framework for Research

	Integration	Collaboration	Effectiveness	Learner-Centeredness	Reducing Student Barriers	Innovation	Response to Context
Community Outreach							
Needs Assessment							
Program Design							
Curriculum							
Approaches and Methods							
Initial Assessment/ Progress Evaluation							
Staff Development							
Support Services							

Site selection

The number of programs to be studied was stipulated by our contract. These nine programs were selected from the nominated programs in a two-step process. First, we selected a pool of high-quality programs, comprising the top twenty percent of qualified, nominated programs. From this smaller pool, we sought nine programs to reflect the diversity of the field. This system ensured that a diverse pool of high-quality programs would be studied.

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[5] For example, we asked program directors "If you were challenged to show that your program is effective, what evidence would you cite?"

In the first stage, we determined if programs were qualified for nomination and then rated each program on the eight program components. A few programs were disqualified because they did not provide direct services to adult ESL literacy students (e.g., programs lending technical computer support) or did not teach ESL literacy (e.g., programs teaching ESL with no low-level students). If a program fell into one of these categories, it received 0% as a final score. If it was unclear whether a program served low-level language minority adults, we preferred to err on the side of over-inclusion rather than under-inclusion, and we therefore went ahead and rated the program.

Rating program nominations

To evaluate a program, one reader, either the project director or the assistant director, read each nomination form and rated its description of program components on a five point scale. Appendix C presents the scale with the narrative criteria for ratings of 1, 3, and 5. In order to establish reliable ratings, the two raters trained on seven nominations in which they rated blindly program nominations that had been read by the other. Although at times there were discrepancies on the number of points awarded on particular components, most scores fell within a reasonable range of the scores given by the other rater (15 percentage points). In the few cases where the rating discrepancy was more than 15%, the nomination form was re-read by both readers and the disparities in ratings were discussed in order to reach consensus on the overall rating.

The component scores were summed and then divided by the total points possible to yield a percentage score for the site. Since some programs did not describe all eight components, the percentage score for these programs was based on the total points possible for the components they described. We then identified the top 20% of the qualified programs on the basis of this percentage score and considered them for further study. By using the numerical ratings of the program components, we ensured that the resultant pool of the top 20% contained the highest quality programs that had participated in the nomination process.

Final site selection

In selecting the final nine sites, we did not necessarily take the nine programs with the highest scores since that might have weighted our pool in favor of one region of the country or one type of provider. Rather, we chose programs that provided diversity in terms of program characteristics typically found in practice, had promising practices, and displayed innovation in service provision to adult ESL learners.

Diversity characteristics

We found traditional and non-traditional program settings among the nominated programs. We also wanted to include among the nine sites mixed as well as single language learner groups and some geographic diversity. We placed the top 20% of programs (N=25) into three two by two matrices describing these elements of diversity (like those in Table 3) in order to gauge how diverse our final pool was and to determine how much overlap in terms of these characteristics there was among the programs.

Secondary site selection criteria

In selecting our nine final sites, we looked for programs that were **innovative** in how they taught ESL literacy or that were **representative** of the good programs in the field. We also looked for programs that exhibited clusters of the programmatic and instructional features outlined in Table 2 below. These features were gleaned from the literature on effective and innovative approaches to ESL literacy, discussions with Working Group members, and informal input from experts in the field. We used these features as secondary criteria to help us decide which programs should be selected. We also kept in mind the fact that we did not want among our nine sites too many programs of a particular type (e.g., more than several family literacy programs) or from one part of the country (e.g., the Northeast).

Final site selection process

After the top 20% of programs were evaluated in terms of our diversity categories, we listed the special features of each of those program and chose nine programs. We selected programs that not only were interesting but also had characteristics that could serve as models for other adult ESL literacy programs. In selecting the final set, we looked for programs that were educationally sound[6] and then tried to balance the following attributes: diversity in terms of geography, student population, and instructional setting; programs that showed clusters of the special features outlined in Table 2; and similarities among programs to allow for comparisons across contexts .

How the final selected sites fit into the diversity criteria is shown in the matrix in Table 3 below. Educationally sound programs that provided a description of teaching literacy in a context and linking curriculum to learners' lives tended to cluster in non-traditional settings.[7] As a result of the project's emphasizing these factors, the final nine sites included only two programs in

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[6] We took "educationally sound" to mean programs that provide a meaningful context for literacy development, generate reading and writing activities based on the learners' background and experiences, and link language and literacy to learners' lives outside the classroom.

[7] For this purpose, we considered literacy taught at the workplace as taking place in a non-traditional setting.

Table 2
Secondary Selection Criteria

We wanted to select sites that featured strong

- student involvement in various aspects of the program (participatory approaches)
- focus on partnerships with other agencies and involvement with the community (collaboration)
- documentation of program success (effectiveness) and/or alternative methods of measuring learner progress (program-based assessment)
- focus on hard-to-reach populations (homebound women, the elderly, rural people)
- efforts to link the curriculum to student lives (often through community literacy, workplace literacy, family literacy)
- focus on meeting the needs of learners studying in a multilevel classroom

We wanted to select sites that displayed innovation in

- teaching adults who have no experience with literacy in their native language (initial literacy, native language support)
- reaching non-literate adults and making it possible for them to stay in the program (appropriate outreach, counseling, support services)
- teaching literacy to adults with limited proficiency in English (approaches such as whole language, functional context instruction, community literacy, problem-posing)
- incorporating literacy into a mandated curriculum (literacy as part of a competency-based curriculum)
- dealing with challenges that the field in general faces (limited resources, part-time teachers, changing student populations)
- using the native language to transition students to English literacy
- providing staff development and making use of volunteers

traditional settings, El Paso (community college) and REEP (adult school). The other programs were sponsored by community-based organizations or involved workplace/worksite literacy. A full listing of the nine sites is given in Table 3 below. As a group, these nine sites reflect the diversity of ESL literacy programs, but they are not the product of random sampling and are not representative in the statistical sense.

Table 3
Diversity characteristics of the nine selected sites

	EAST		MIDWEST		WEST	
	trad	non-trad	trad	non-trad	trad	non-trad
single		HMSC (Haitian) El Barrio (Spanish)	El Paso (Spanish)	Lao (Hmong)		
mixed	REEP	IIRI		UAW Project Workplace		ReWA

In addition to selecting for variability in key characteristics as indicated in Table 3 above, we picked programs that would allow us to compare across sites within the same program type. For example, both the Lao and ReWA programs offer family literacy as a mainstay of their ESL literacy classes. Three sites (Project Workplace, REEP, El Paso) have workplace literacy strands. El Barrio, El Paso, Lao, and HMSC offer native language literacy instruction and transitions to ESL. REEP and IIRI offer ESL literacy as part of a more general ESL program of long standing. REEP and Project Workplace, and to some extent Lao, use competency-based curricula. IIRI, El Barrio, and El Paso have participatory approaches in the classroom.

A provisional list of selected sites, together with a rationale for why each was selected, was submitted to the Department of Education, and they concurred with our choices. We then telephoned the site directors at the nine sites, explained that three-day site visits would be involved, and requested their participation in the research. All agreed.[8]

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[8] Literacy Education Action at El Paso Community College, which is the umbrella organization for a number of different literacy programs, submitted separate applications for their workplace literacy, family literacy, and small group ESL literacy programs. The latter two were almost tied in our ratings. We had originally selected the family literacy program, but it lost funding between when we selected it and when we could arrange a site visit. Therefore, the small group instruction program became the primary focus of our site visit.

Table 4
Nine selected sites

Adult ESL Literacy Project Sites

El Barrio Popular Education Program
218 East 106 Street
5th Floor
New York, NY 10029

Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA)
3004 S. Alaska
Seattle, WA 98108

Haitian Multi-Service Center (HMSC)
Adult Basic Education Program
12 Bicknell Street
Dorchester, MA 02125

International Institute of Rhode Island (IIRI)
Literacy/ESL Program
375 Broad Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02907

Lao Family Community of Minnesota
Family English Literacy Program
976 West Minnehaha Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104

Project Workplace Literacy Partners for the Manufacturing Industry in Cook County
Adult Learning Resource Center
1855 Mt. Prospect Road
Des Plaines, IL 60018

Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP)
Wilson Adult Center
1601 Wilson Blvd
Arlington, VA 22209

Literacy Education Action (LEA)
Small Group Instruction Program
El Paso Community College
P.O. Box 20500
El Paso, TX 79998

UAW/Chrysler Tech Prep Academy
Eastern Michigan University
Corporate Services
3075 Washtenaw
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Data Collection

We used loosely-structured group and individual interviews with program staff, informal focus group interviews with ESL literacy learners, and classroom observations as the main data collection methods. Additional data provided to the project included program documentation such as a tutor training manual or a curriculum, lesson plans, evaluation reports, and other program material including student writing.

Interview and Observation Guides

The project developed separate interview guides for major categories of program people. The interview guide for program directors included questions about all eight of the components plus additional questions related to the community of the learners, technology, innovation, and effectiveness. The interview guide for teachers focused more narrowly on topics related to classroom teaching such as curriculum and approaches to teaching literacy. The interview guides formed the outline for the interview and included all topics that we wanted to discuss.

A classroom observation form was also developed and used by both researchers whenever they observed a class. The observation form focused on "what does the teacher do?" (literacy task) and "what do the students do?" (literacy behavior) and included additional questions for the researchers about the use of print in the class, cooperative learning, authentic communication, and use of the native language.

A "script" for the informal focus groups with learners was developed before the first site visit. The script called for introducing the project to the learners and the learners to the researchers (via name, country, why I want to study English), relating what reading and writing the learners did in class and outside of class, and describing the "before literacy class" and "after" of situations in which they had to read or write. Our purpose in talking with the learners directly was to increase our understanding of why they wanted to learn English and what changes the literacy classes had made in their lives.

All of the data collection instruments appear in the appendices to this volume.

Three members of the project staff field tested our data collection instruments and our informal focus group script and procedures at the City College of San Francisco, Mission Center, where the ESL literacy students are primarily Spanish-speakers. As a result of the field test, we realized that we would not be able to ask all the questions in our interview guides and that we would have to select high priority questions for each site. Further, we realized that we would have to temper our notion of triangulation because of time constraints, and so, for example, we decided to ask teachers about the things they would know best (curriculum, approaches, methods, assessment), rather than asking them to comment on all aspects of the program .

Data collection procedures

At each site, both researchers participated in and took notes during all the interviews and observations (with minor exceptions) although one or the other took the lead in the interview according to a pre-specified plan. The project director used the administrator interview guide to take the lead in interviewing the program director and other administrative personnel on all non-instructional topics. The assistant director used a separate guide to interview them on issues related to curriculum and teaching. The assistant director took the lead in interviewing teachers either singly or in groups about curriculum, approaches, and methods in the classroom. When we had the opportunity, we interviewed other program staff (such as counselors, curriculum coordinators, bilingual aides and/or teaching interns, program founders) using appropriate questions culled from the interview guides. In general, we tried to audiotape each of the interviews.

We recognized from the outset that, while it was likely that we could cover all the topics in the interview guides, it might not be possible to get through all the individual questions. We allowed ourselves considerable latitude in sequencing the questions and in moving from one topic to another. We chose among the questions based on our prior knowledge and information about the site and the kind of answers we received as various topics were introduced during the interviews.[9]

As we moved from site to site, we refined our interview approach by noting which interview questions seemed to give us the most useful data. For example, we discovered that asking learners what advice they might have for other students who wondered if taking ESL literacy classes was worthwhile produced better responses than asking them what advice they had for programs. As a second example, explicitly asking program directors how they could show that their literacy program was effective gave us better data than trying to read between the lines of less direct questions and answers on the same subject.

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[9] For example, if a program director said that we should talk with teachers rather than her about what approaches were used in the classroom, we did not pursue this topic further with the program director.

Data collection during site visits

The site contact person, together with one of the project's research assistants, usually set up the schedule for the site visit, including selecting with which classes we would conduct focus groups and with which teachers we would meet.

When possible, we requested that we interview the program director first in order to get an overview of the program. We typically met separately with the administrator or program director for an initial period of two hours and then again towards the end of the visit for two more hours.

We interviewed several (2-6) teachers either individually or sometimes in groups for an hour or an hour and a half. The teachers, of course, needed to maintain their normal teaching load while we were there. So we fit in our interviews whenever it was convenient for them. We typically interviewed more teachers at a site than just those whose classes we observed. If the schedule permitted, we preferred to do a one-hour interview with a teacher before we observed her/his class, but time constraints sometimes allowed for only a quick chat before and/or after class.

In addition, we had contact with the adult learners in two ways, through observing literacy classes and through the informal focus groups. For classroom observations, the two researchers usually sat in the back of the class (typically after being introduced to the class) and took notes and did not directly participate in the class.

For the informal focus groups, the researchers met with one or two groups of about 7-10 students for an hour without the teacher's being present. Often, these were the same learners we had earlier observed in class. The focus groups usually took place during part of class time, and the learners were typically all from the same class and knew one another. There was no attempt to get a representative sample of learners. At sites where we interviewed more than one group of students, we usually talked to one beginning-level class and another class which had been in the program longer. Learner responses were recorded on the spot, using the learners' own phrasing as much as possible, on a flip-chart for all to see. We used a translator to assist us when we talked with beginning-level literacy students. We requested that the translator not be a teacher, but he/she often was a former student or someone else from the community.

We found that we had to adjust the informal focus group script at the sites for a number of reasons: sometimes we had less time with students than the hour we had requested; and some questions such as "What advice would you give to other students who are thinking of attending an ESL literacy program?" did not work well with very low-level students. The dynamics of the focus groups varied considerably from lively discussions to short-answer responses.

Not all of our contacts with program people were in formal tape-recorded interviews. We shared meals and hospitality with staff at all the sites, and, at several sites, they organized something special such as a special multi-national pot luck lunch (ReWA) or a trip to a Haitian restaurant (HMSC). Occasionally, our workday began early with a breakfast meeting (UAW/Chrysler) or lasted well into the evening as we met with teachers over dinner (Lao) or observed an evening class (HMSC).

The on-site data collection began in May 1991 and continued until October, with only two site visits during the summer (UAW/Chrysler and HMSC) since most literacy programs were not fully operational during the summer months. The data we collected can perhaps best be seen as snapshots of the programs at a particular point in time, since we found that three days was not really enough time to develop a comprehensive understanding of all the factors related to the program. Indeed only in exceptional cases were we able to observe the same class or the same teacher more than once. In addition, program-specific teaching and class schedules constrained what we could observe and who we could talk with. If, for example, we visited a program on Tuesday through Thursday, we had only one chance to observe Wednesday classes. Similarly, if a program offered staff development on Friday but there were no classes that day (as was true at several sites), our desire to observe classes meant that we were not in town to sit in on staff development activities.

Program directors, teachers, and learners all greeted us enthusiastically and participated fully in the research interviews. One of our initial sites had asked to see the interview guides before the researchers arrived at the site so that they would know what to expect. This procedure reassured the sites and allowed program directors and teachers to do some thinking along the lines of questions we would ask. The sites found this so helpful that we made it a regular practice for the fall data collection. In fact, at a number of the sites, teaching staff prepared for our visit by undertaking special activities such as researching some of the ESL terms we had used in our interview guides or talking together about their practice in the light of our questions. All of the sites said that they had benefitted from our coming to visit them. One site reported that it was validating to have someone from the outside observe what they were doing and describe it in academic terminology (such as "emergent curriculum") that they could then use themselves. We made it clear at every site that we were not evaluators and had no power over their funding.

Other Data Sources

Preceding each site visit, project staff usually conducted an extensive telephone interview with the site contact person, who was typically the program director. The interview filled in some gaps in the nomination form and helped the researchers prepare for the site visit. For example, if a program did not think that their needs assessment was strong, they did not fill out that portion of the nomination form. During the phone interview, however, we were able to ascertain whether or not they actually did a needs assessment and, if so, how it was done.

In addition, some programs provided us with other data sources via supplementary material such as research papers describing aspects of the program, outlines for staff development sessions, copies of curricula or lessons that they had developed, copies of handbooks that they had written, and locally-developed assessment instruments.

Preparation of case reports

Analysis of cases was a progressive and recursive activity as we successively refined our themes (set out earlier in this chapter) and discovered new ones. As we completed one site visit and talked about what we had observed, we began to discuss findings that were emerging (e.g., learner-centeredness was taking a variety of different forms) and new categories that we had not expected (e.g., a number of sites had a charismatic program director who made it all happen).

The two researchers debriefed each other for each site. As soon as possible after each site visit, each separately studied her notes from the interviews and observations at the site and wrote up her most salient findings from the site. Again we discussed major themes and promising practices that had emerged.

For each program, the data from the two sets of site visit notes, telephone interview, nomination form, and other supporting material were synthesized and summarized in a case study report. The site reports consisted of a narrative of our findings and observations organized by the eight program components and incorporated the views of both researchers. The eight components provide the "basic descriptive framework" that is one of the strategies for analyzing case study data.[10] Our site descriptions were used in at least two ways:

1) Data from each site are summarized by component in the technical report (see Part II). For example, for the El Barrio program there is a description of its community outreach, needs assessment, program design, curriculum, etc.

2) Data from each site appears among the promising practices in the project's handbook and among the project's findings and recommendations in the technical report.

For added validity and reliability, each site report was sent to the site director for review and clarification. The practice of asking stakeholders to review data and conclusions to see if they make sense to them is known as a member check; this process is a check for validation and verification.[11] Typically, the sites requested changes to minor points and confirmed that the site report was congruent with their own experience at the program. In one instance, neither we nor the site director anticipated that a company involved in a workplace literacy program might not want its name used. The problem was solved by referring to the companies as Company A and Company B. Time did not permit the sites to review other categories and conclusions based upon data gathered at the sites (e.g., the promising practices and cases in point in the handbook and technical report).

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[10] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Revised ed. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989), p. 107.

[11] See Hanna Arlene Fingeret and Susan Tuck Danin, *They Really Put a Hurtin' on my Brain: Learning in Literacy Volunteers of New York City* (Durham, NC: Literacy South, 1991), p. 26.

Chapter 3

Characteristics of the Nominated Programs

In this chapter, we will examine the data on programs generated by the 123 nomination forms. In general, program staff that determined that their adult ESL literacy program met the project's criteria for inclusion in the study filled out nomination forms giving background information about the program and descriptions of the program's strengths vis a vis the eight components (see the nomination form in Appendix B). In Section A, we will first use the data to sketch a picture of ESL literacy programs generally. Section B contains short profiles of the nine selected sites to provide a context for the section that follows. In Section C, we will use additional data gathered during visits to the nine selected sites to illustrate and amplify some of the key variables discussed in the earlier section.

Several preliminary words of caution are in order before discussing the data: (1) the 123 nominated programs were self-selected and cannot be considered a statistically representative sample of adult ESL literacy programs, and (2) programs' understanding of terms like "family literacy" and "whole language" may differ significantly. With these caveats, the completed nomination forms, based on self-report, can provide valuable insight into adult ESL literacy programs. For most of the questions on the nomination form, programs were asked to mark all that apply, and the total number of responses in the tables in the first section of this chapter tend to be greater than the number of nominated programs. The tables in the second section reflect only the nine selected sites.

Section A: Characteristics of 123 Adult ESL Literacy Programs

Learner Characteristics

Programs were asked to indicate the countries of origin of their literacy students and their literacy levels.

Student Ethnicity

Fifty-eight separate countries were named by programs when they were asked to list the countries of origin of their literacy students. When the data were further categorized, as Table 5 shows, we found that 64 out of 123 programs (52%) numbered primarily Spanish-speakers among their literacy students. A further 30 of the programs (24%) served primarily Asian students. And 45 (37%) had student populations that were mixed, that is, no one native language predominated among the students.

Table 5
Predominant Ethnicity of Learners at Nominated Programs

Predominant Ethnicity	N
Mixed	48
Hispanic	46
Asian	20
Other	7
N/A	2

Programs were asked to characterize whether they emphasized primarily initial literacy (for learners who could not read and write in their native language), beginning literacy (for learners who might have some literacy skills in their native language and can typically write their own names), and basic literacy (for learners who can read and write simple messages). 72 out of the 123 programs (59%) reported that they had learners who needed initial literacy.

Program Setting

Programs in many states participated in the nomination process as Table 6 shows. States with the largest ESL populations (California, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas) submitted the most nominations.

As Table 7 shows, the nominated programs were predominantly urban (62%) although some served both urban and rural areas (10%).

Table 6
Distribution of Nominated Programs by State

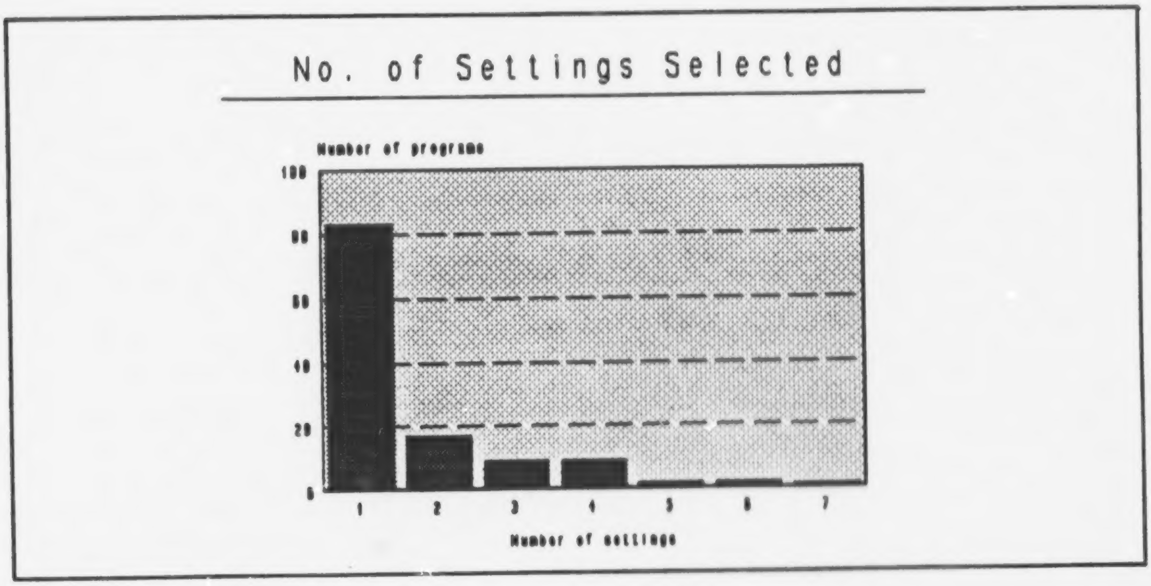
Arkansas	2	Montana	2
Arizona	3	Mississippi	3
California	16	North Carolina	2
Connecticut	1	New Mexico	1
District of Columbia	2	New York	12
Florida	8	Ohio	1
Hawaii	2	Oregon	1
Iowa	2	Pennsylvania	2
Idaho	2	Rhode Island	1
Illinois	12	Texas	12
Louisiana	1	Utah	1
Massachusetts	6	Virginia	4
Maryland	2	Washington	2
Maine	1	Wisconsin	2
Michigan	6	West Virginia	1
Minnesota	8	Wyoming	2

Table 7
Rural and Urban Distribution of Nominated Programs

urban	76
rural	16
urban & rural	12
other	19

In terms of program settings for the ESL literacy programs, as Table 8 indicates, the nominated programs were well dispersed among community-based organizations, adult schools, workplaces, and community colleges, in addition to a number of other settings.

Figure 1
Number of Program Settings Selected by Nominated Programs



Figures 1 and 2 delineate the pattern of different settings among the nominated sites. Most programs (67%) served students in only one setting, as Figure 1 shows. Figure 2 shows that programs whose ESL literacy classes occurred at only one setting are well-distributed among the possible settings with the same four settings that headed the overall list again dominating this group.

These data and the data in Figure 1 raise several questions about program setting:

- Does "program setting" reflect where classes actually take place or does it reflect the type of agency that administers the ESL literacy program?
- Do community-based organizations actually provide a significant amount of the adult ESL literacy services in the country?

Table 8
Program Settings Selected by Nominated Programs

Community-based organization	46
Local Education Agency	39
Workplace	31
Community College	27
Church	21
Library	11
Public Schools	11
Homes	4
University	3
Migrant Camps	3
Vocational School	2
Other (specified)	7
Other (unspecified)	5

Figure 2
Distribution of Settings for Programs Checking Only One

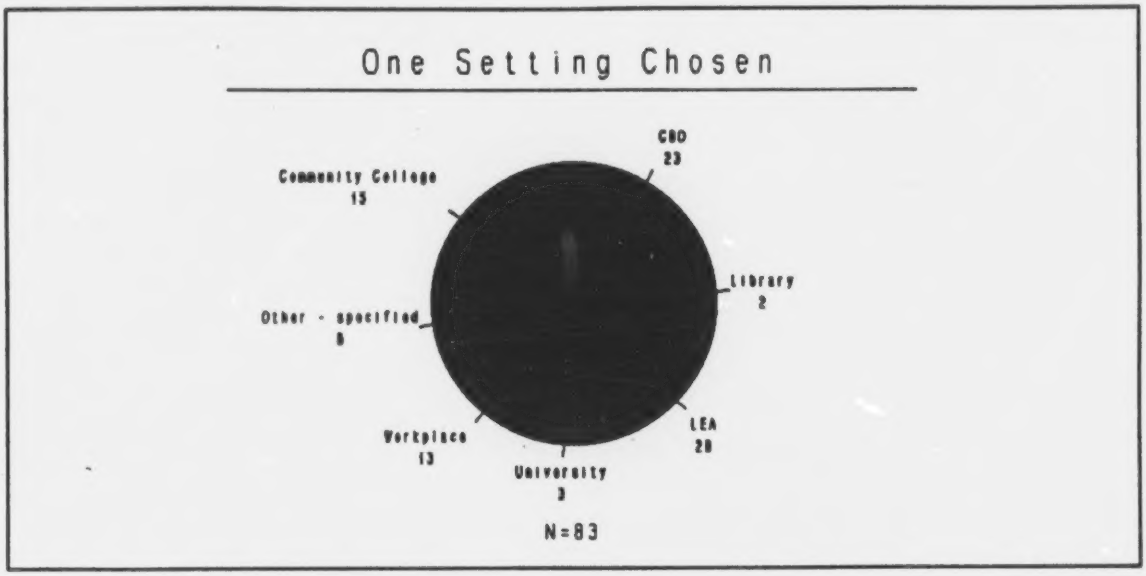
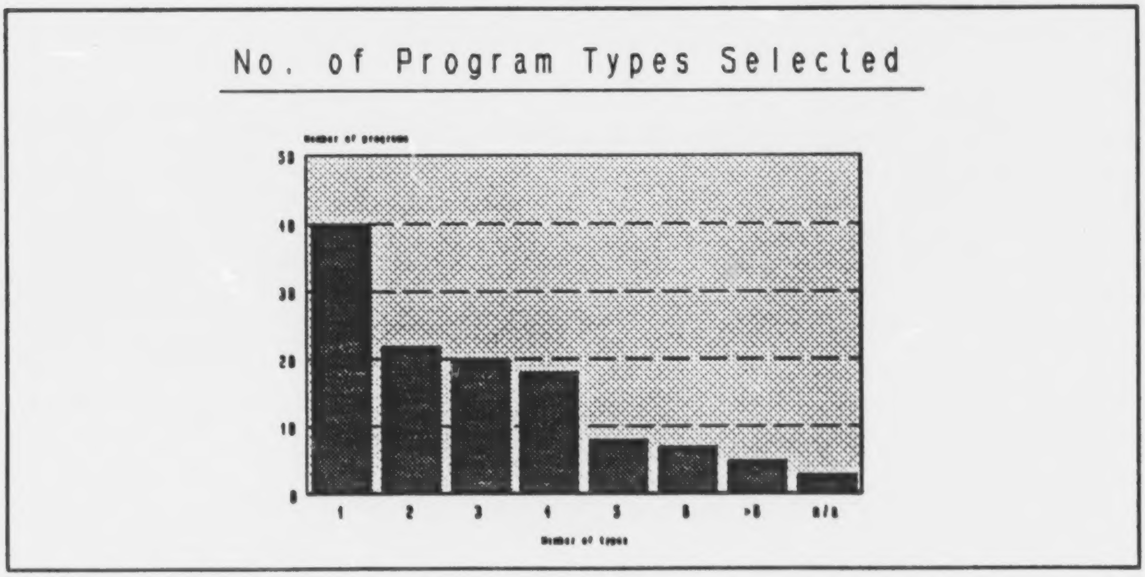


Figure 3
Number of Program Types Selected by Nominated Programs



Program Type

In practice the type of literacy program that a site can offer is affected by the source of its funding. For example, if a program applies for and receives a state or federal workplace literacy grant, they must use the funding for a workplace literacy program. So program type reflects not only what the program considers appropriate for the population for which it wants to provide literacy services but also the availability of funding.

Table 9
Program Types Selected by Nominated Programs

Adult Basic Education (ABE)	65
Amnesty	44
Family Literacy	41
Refugee	38
Tutor/One-to-one	37
Workplace Literacy	36
Pre-employment/Vocational	29
Farmworker	15
ESL	8
Other (specified)	22
Other (unspecified)	7
n/a	3

As Table 9 indicates, programs providing literacy instruction to language minority adults encompass a broad span of program types ranging from family literacy to workplace and pre-employment programs to tutoring programs. Although both native English and ESL literacy services are frequently thought of as part of Adult Basic Education (ABE), Table 9 indicates that only slightly more than half of the nominated programs reported that they were an ABE program (65 of the 120 programs providing data, 54%).[1] In fact, the data from these nominated programs tend to support a contention that a significant number of ESL literacy programs are being funded outside of the federal Adult Education Act.

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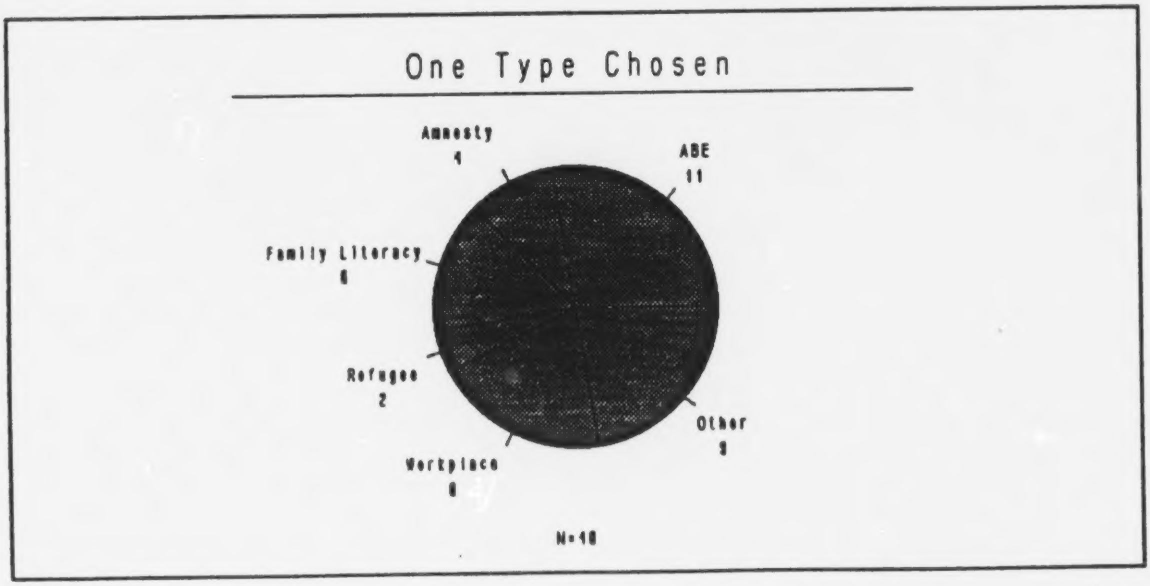
[1] It is unknown whether programs that checked ABE meant that they received federal ABE funds.

Programs can and do provide more than one type of literacy program for language minority adults. As Figure 3 shows, running several different types of programs was the norm among the nominated programs: 80 of the 120 programs (67%) reported that they provided more than one type of program for ESL literacy instruction. The 120 programs can be broken down roughly into thirds: 40 of the 120 programs (33%) reported that they ran just one type of adult ESL literacy program, another third of the programs (42 programs, 35%) provided two or three types of literacy services, and the remaining third provided four or more.

The major finding about program type is that, when referring to an "adult ESL literacy program," policymakers, researchers, and others in the field should take into account the complexity of literacy program types being run at any one site or administered through it. Different reporting requirements and learner qualifications for entry can place burdens on programs' meager administrative resources. A related question that is raised is how sites combine program types: that is, do they offer separate ESL literacy programs focused on ABE and family literacy, for example, or do they combine in one set of classes both types of programs?

Figure 4
Distribution of Types for Programs Checking Only One



Program Goals

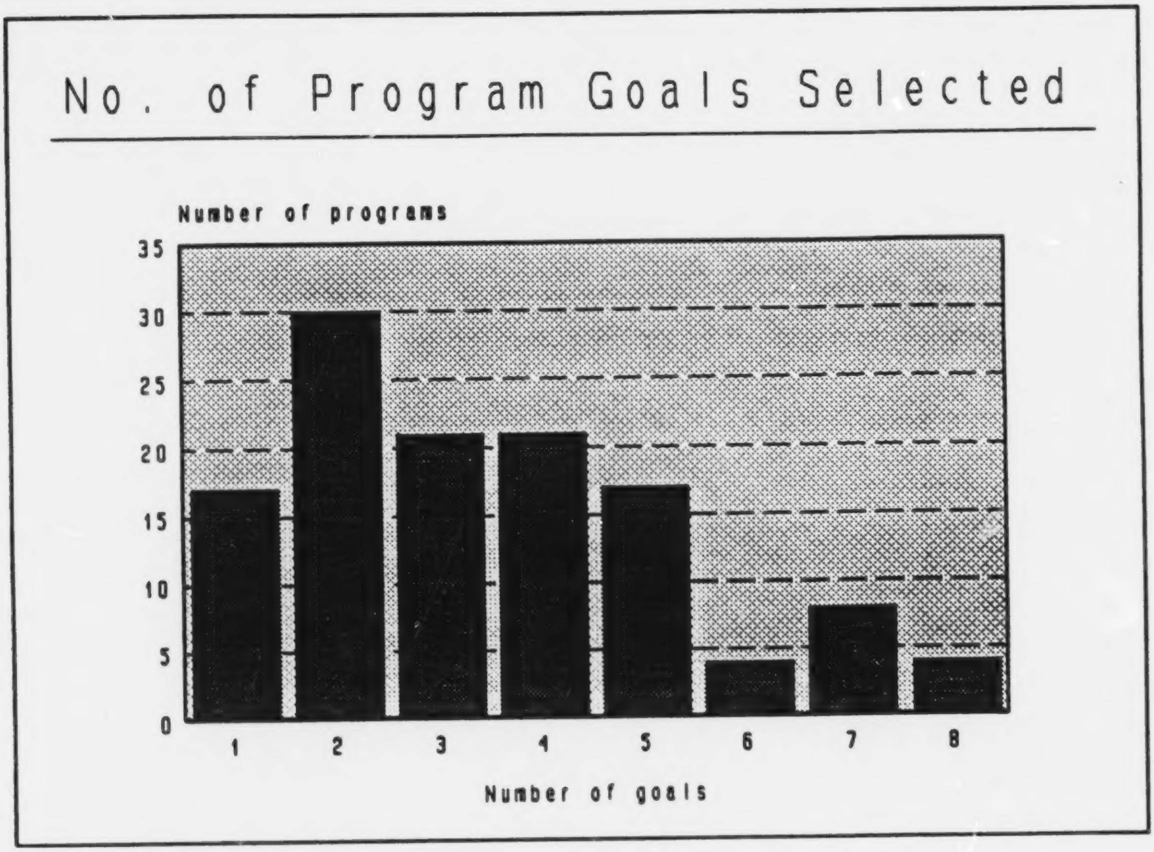
Table 10
Program Goals Selected by Nominated Programs

Life skills & survival literacy	93
Basic literacy skills	81
Work-related literacy	55
Community-oriented literacy	51
Literacy and civics	40
Family literacy	36
Other (unspecified)	18
Other (specified)	11

As Table 10 shows, when adult ESL literacy programs describe their goals, there is once again abundant evidence for diversity. These program goals may be tied to program type (as in the case of family literacy), but more often the program goals are general and associated with more than one program type. For example, life skills can be included in the curriculum for almost any program type and, although basic literacy may not be a primary goal of some programs, grammar and syntax find their way into classes in response to learners' questions. The diversity of attributed goals reinforces the idea that there are different literacies for different contexts.

One question generated by the data in Table 10 is whether the majority of adult ESL literacy programs see themselves as having more than one program goal. The data presented in Figure 5 answer this question in the affirmative. As Figure 5 shows, the vast majority of programs report multiple literacy goals, and only a small minority of programs (14%) have a single literacy goal. By having more than one goal for their program, these ESL literacy programs throughout the country acknowledge that, like native English speakers, language-minority adults need literacy in many realms of their lives.

Figure 5
Number of Program Goals Selected by Nominated Programs



Some questions to consider based on these data are the following:

- How do programs integrate several literacy goals at once?
- How do the program goals relate to curriculum, assessment, and what goes on in the classroom?

Approaches to teaching language and literacy

Programs that submitted nomination forms were asked to mark one or more approaches that they used in teaching language and literacy to adult ESL literacy students. A number of patterns emerged from looking at the responses. As Table 11 shows, the data reveal a trend towards meaning-based, rather than mechanical skills-based approaches. The vast majority of programs used whole language/language experience approaches in the classroom. Competency-based instruction forms part of the framework for instruction at almost as many programs.

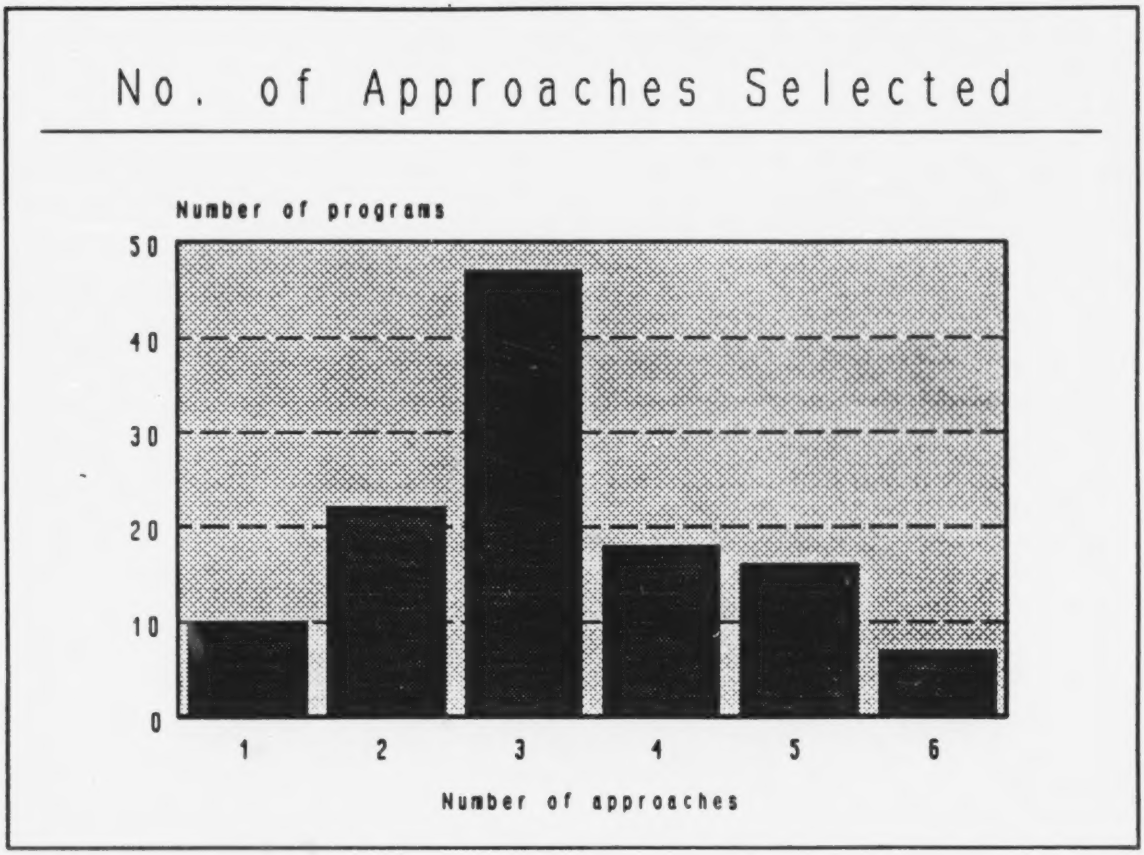
Table 11
Instructional Approaches Selected by Nominated Programs

Whole Language/Language experience	96
Competency-based/Life skills	94
Task-based/Functional literacy	72
Skills-based/Phonics	55
Freirean/Problem-posing	49
Other (specified)	13
Other (unspecified)	7
N/A	2

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of approaches used at programs is that programs tend to use a combination of approaches in teaching adult ESL literacy. Indeed, as Figure 6 shows, slightly more than a third of the programs used three or more approaches simultaneously. Less than 10% used only a single approach, and a somewhat surprising third of the programs combined four or more approaches in their classrooms.

If we delve deeper into the data and examine which approaches were selected by programs with the modal number of three approaches, as Table 12 shows, we see the complexity of trying to categorize approaches. Note from the band of highlighted combinations in the center of the table that competency-based and whole language approaches frequently are combined. The key finding here is that these terms appear to have different shades of meaning at various programs.

Figure 6
Number of Approaches Selected by Nominated Programs



The key questions that emerge from the data are the following:

- What do the various terms mean when seen in program contexts?

  For example, what do programs understand by the term "whole language" when it is combined with competency-based and skills-based approaches? How is this understanding different from the "whole language" approach combined with Freirean problem-posing and task-based instruction? Similarly how is Freirean problem-posing combined with task-based and skills-based approaches different from a Freirean approach combined with whole language and a third approach?

Table 12
Composites Identified by Programs Using 3 Approaches

Competency -based & life skills	Freirean & problem-posing	Task-based & functional literacy	Skills-based & phonics	Whole language & language experience	Other	N
X	X	X				3
X		X	X			3
X		X			X	1
X	X			X		6
X			X	X		11
X		X		X		13
	X	X	X			1
	X			X	X	2
	X	X		X		3
	X		X	X		2
		X		X	X	2

- How are the various approaches weighted at particular programs? That is, how similar are programs that checked the same configuration of approaches?

  For example, two programs that checked competency-based, Freirean, and whole language may actually have quite different approaches in the classroom. One program may use a competency-based curriculum that is externally developed and then employ a version of problem-posing and some whole texts as a way of moving learners through the required competencies. Another program may use problem-posing as their primary approach but include some whole language activities and life-skills competencies among their arsenal of teaching approaches.

What do these data on approaches reveal about the field? The key finding is that very few programs appear to use a "pure" approach limited to a single point of view. Rather, more than 90% of the participating programs seem to have developed their own combination of approaches. The overall question generated by these data is whether the nominated programs have eclectic approaches that grew like topsy with one approach layered on top of another as fashions and staff changed or whether their combination of approaches have a kind of internal consistency growing out of the history of the program, the needs of the learners, and the training of the staff.

Assessment

We also asked programs to tell us which methods of assessment they used to assess proficiency levels and to document learner progress from among the following list (see the nomination form in Appendix B): standardized tests, program-based assessment, participatory assessment, materials-based assessment, informal assessment, and other.

Of the 123 nominated programs, 40 (35%) did not use standardized tests at all, but they used some other form of learner assessment. 80 of the 123 programs (65%) used some form of standardized test, but 78 of those 80 programs combined their use of a standardized test with another form of assessment. Reflective of the fact that few, if any, standardized test have been found appropriate for beginning ESL students, 44 different standardized tests were mentioned by the ESL literacy programs, ranging from tests developed at that particular program to national tests in wide use. The number and variety of standardized tests is probably indicative of the fact that some funders require that programs give "valid and reliable" tests to their learners, regardless of whether the tests are appropriate. The issues surrounding assessment are complex. A test that is valid and reliable for one purpose (e.g., comparing programs) might well be totally inappropriate for another (e.g., measuring ESL learners' literacy progress).[2]

Section B: Profiles of the Nine Selected Programs

Short profiles of the nine selected sites are presented in the pages that follow. The profiles are intended to provide a context for the discussion of the data from the nine sites in Section C. The full site reports for each of the nine sites can be found in Part II of this report.

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[2] For further discussion of assessment, see chapter 4 of this report and the assessment chapter in the handbook, *Bringing Literacy to Life*.

PROFILE OF SELECTED SITE

Name of program:	**Project Workplace Literacy Partners for the Manufacturing Industry in Cook County Des Plaines, IL**

Program Characteristics:

program setting:	Non-traditional (workplace)
student population:	Heterogeneous (Mexican, Central American, Polish, Vietnamese, Indian, Korean)
geographic location:	Midwest (Des Plaines, IL)
program type:	Workplace
size:	600 students (250 ESL students)

Program Design:

Project Workplace offers literacy classes to workers at their worksites. The program employs both full-time and part-time staff and utilizes collaborative decision-making. Project Workplace has developed a strong partnership with a manufacturing association. Project Workplace provides workplace literacy classes at a number of sites, two of which were visited during this study.

Key Features:

Project Workplace as a whole teaches work-related literacy development using an innovative competency-based format. Their assessment combines standardized tests with student interviews and measures learning through performance demonstrations. The program performs an interesting needs assessment by doing extensive literacy audits. The staff development is designed to maximize the strengths of the full-time and part-time staff by offering separate staff development concentrating on different topics for each group. For example, full-time staff are trained to perform literacy audits and staff supervision while part-time staff focus on teaching techniques and measurement of learning.

Description of Literacy Component:

Project Workplace uses a core competency-based curriculum which is customized for each course at each worksite. The program strongly focuses on work-related skills and tasks such as reading graphs and processing work-related documents. Some learning activities include Total Physical Response, role-playing, task performances, and journal writing.

PROFILE OF SELECTED SITE

Name of program:	**El Barrio Popular Education Program New York, NY**

Program Characteristics:

program setting:	Non-traditional (CBO)
student population:	Homogeneous (Spanish-speaking Caribbean: 56% Puerto Rican, 29% Dominican Republic, 15% other)
geographic location:	East (New York, NY)
program type:	Spanish literacy; ABE
size:	70 students (includes all literacy levels)

Program Design:

El Barrio offers three levels of Spanish literacy, and the most advanced level is combined with English literacy. There are two levels of ESL, a GED class, a pre-college ESL class, a leadership component, a sewing co-operative, and a computer lab/class.

Key Features:

El Barrio is a strong Spanish literacy program. Its literacy component and program design are particularly innovative. The program has been successful at moving some students from initial literacy on to GED and college and continues to expand to meet students goals by adding ESL and pre-college classes. Consistent with its popular education/Freirean model, students actively participate in all facets of the program; even the ESL literacy students are members of the Board of Directors. The program has a goal of community control of the program. Entrepreneurial efforts such as the sewing co-op, which focuses both on the economic survival of the program and the students, are tied to classroom instruction. Leadership training provides students with specific skills needed to participate actively in the program and in other community groups such as school boards. Students are encouraged to become teachers in the program and are trained in popular education techniques. The strong research and development component from which the program originated has become an integral part of teaching and learning literacy at El Barrio.

Description of Literacy Component:

The program initially focuses on Spanish literacy using a whole language approach combined with a Freirean model. This method appears successful in teaching literacy as a foundation for full economic, social, and cultural participation in the community. Discussion, reading, and writing are part of every class.

PROFILE OF SELECTED SITE

Name of program: **Haitian Multi-Service Center (HMSC)**
Dorchester, MA

Program Characteristics:

program setting: Non-traditional (CBO)
student population: Homogeneous (Haitian)
geographic location: East (Dorchester, MA)
program type: ABE
size: 380 total students

Program Design:

The Haitian Multi-Service Center (HMSC) offers a Kreyol[3] literacy class, a Kreyol to English transition class, and a series of ESL classes. HMSC also offers social services such as pregnancy education, AIDS education, and refugee resettlement housing to the local Haitian community.

Key Features:

HMSC presents an innovative use of native language (Kreyol) literacy to help students transition into English. They are implementing an interesting staff development design in which teachers meet weekly to share experiences in the classroom. HMSC uses a promising model of working with teaching interns from the University of Massachusetts/Boston. HMSC uses alternative assessment, including student portfolios and self-assessment based on students' own goals. The teaching staff are mainly Haitian or bilingual in English/Kreyol, and many come from the same community as the learners. In a new technology project, the program helps their students to communicate with literacy students at other programs through a computer modem link.

Description of Literacy Component:

The Kreyol component is based on a Freirean model using generative words from themes and issues facing Haitians in the Dorchester area. The language experience approach is used to supplement the model, and the class stories are printed in a student-run magazine three times a year. The teaching emphasis is whole language in the transition and ESL classes. Bilingual support is offered in the transition class as well as the ESL classes.

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[3] HMSC's spelling

PROFILE OF SELECTED SITE

Name of program:

Literacy/ESL Program
International Institute of Rhode Island
Providence, Rhode Island

Program Characteristics:

program setting:	Non-traditional (CBO)
student population:	Heterogeneous (37% Cambodian and Laotian; 45% Spanish-speaking; 18% Other)
geographic location:	East (Providence, RI)
program type:	ESL literacy
size:	183 students (60 literacy students)

Program Design:

The literacy/ESL program is part of the International Institute of Rhode Island (IIRI) which includes an education division with six different programs and a social service division that offers immigration counseling and other services. The on-site literacy program offers four classes and serves about 60 students from a variety of backgrounds (the latest group is from Russia). The literacy program is also linked to off-site programs in housing projects and at a worksite.

Special Features:

This program is special because of its collaborative model and emphasis on increasing access to literacy learning opportunities for non-native speakers of English. Joint efforts at staff development have resulted in action research projects and a collaboratively written handbook. The program uses an emergent curriculum that is learner-centered. The use of alternative assessment is a particularly innovative component of this program.

Description of Literacy Component:

The program emphasizes the process of literacy development through a strong focus on learner-generated topics. The teacher acts as facilitator who "guides learners through various language and literacy events and activities derived from learner-generated content." The literacy/ESL program demonstrates an excellent integration of language skills development through emphasis on dialogue and problem-posing and through the use of a variety of texts which meet the specific needs and interests of learners.

PROFILE OF SELECTED SITE

Name of program:

Lao Family Community of Minnesota
Family English Literacy (FEL) Program
St. Paul, MN

Program Characteristics:

program setting:	Non-traditional (CBO)
student population:	Homogeneous (Hmong)
geographic location:	Midwest (St. Paul, MN)
program type:	family literacy
size:	350 students

Program Design:

The FEL program is the principal literacy program of the Lao Family Community which is a community-based mutual assistance association governed and managed by Hmong residents. The FEL program is designed to overcome two main barriers to Hmong participation in literacy classes by providing childcare and offering literacy classes in community centers. In addition, a home tutoring component provides bilingual tutors who conduct home and school visits to encourage parent involvement and assist them in addressing their children's school problems.

Key Features:

The FEL program represents a viable model for meeting the literacy needs of an underserved group of adult learners. The program was designed jointly by Hmong and non-Hmong educational staff and includes bilingual refugees teaching as peers along with the non-Hmong teachers. The program teaches both Hmong literacy and English literacy to beginning level learners.

The program has a strong emphasis on maintaining linguistic and cultural values, while at the same time recognizing the need to address high unemployment and problems of cultural adaption through the teaching of language and literacy. The family literacy model is uniquely suitable for this population, given the high numbers of Hmong children in the schools of Minnesota.

Description of Literacy Component:

The program uses both real-life materials and Hmong folk tales; journal writing is used to develop vocabulary, validate cultural activities, and enhance the functional use of literacy. Reading, writing, and oral discussion take place in the context of the students' experiences. The program emphasizes all four language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The curriculum emphasizes issues of interest to students.

PROFILE OF SELECTED SITE

Name of program: **Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) Arlington, VA**

Program Characteristics:

program setting: Traditional (LEA)
student population: Heterogeneous (72% Spanish-speaking; 28% other)
geographic location: East (Arlington, VA)
program type: ABE, workplace
size: 609 students

Program Design:

REEP has three educational components, general ESL, workplace literacy, and an adult learning center. The general ESL component is divided into three tracks, A, B, and C. Track A provides ESL literacy classes for students who have had five or fewer years of education in their own countries. Literacy students can move up to tracks B and C and develop their academic skills within the program. The learning center offers state of the art computer and video technology to enhance ESL and literacy learning.

Key Features:

REEP is a strong competency-based program that has implemented some innovative features in their ESL curriculum. The program's outreach targets ESL literacy students through innovative means (e.g., "visitor's night" when students are encourages to bring guests to class). REEP's use of technology is innovative. For example, one project is developing a program that uses interactive videodiscs to develop the oral language and literacy skills of workers in the service industry. The learning center uses technology to foster cooperative learning and to give access to learners whose schedules make it difficult to attend regular ESL classes.

REEP shows strong participation and retention rates and has a well-articulated overall approach.

Description of Literacy Component:

The competency-based curriculum is solid and well-constructed. REEP shows an innovative approach to working with a competency-based curriculum by enhancing it with activities such as journal writing, the language experience approach, and process writing. In the workplace program, REEP makes an effort to tie the curriculum with students' job needs.

PROFILE OF SELECTED SITE

Name of program: **Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA)**
Seattle, WA

Program Characteristics:

program setting: Non-traditional (CBO)
student population: Heterogeneous (65% Southeast Asian; 35% Eritrean, Ethiopian, Soviet)
geographic location: West (Seattle, WA)
program type: refugee
size: 65 students

Program Design:

The Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) was set up in the early 1980's by refugee women to provide educational and social services to homebound refugee women. The organization, located in a housing project, offers ESL literacy classes along with many on-site bilingual, bicultural social services, such as mental health counseling, on-site childcare, and housing assistance. The location and social services greatly enhance learners' opportunities to attend classes. ReWA offers three levels of ESL literacy classes. The first two levels are taught by teachers from a local community college with the help of ReWA's bilingual aides. The third level is taught by ReWA staff.

Key Features:

ReWA does an excellent job reaching and retaining a typically hard to reach population: low-income, homebound refugee women without any literacy skills. The program has implemented innovative features to enhance its competency-based curriculum, such as using storytelling activities and language experience stories. ReWA uses bilingual/bicultural aides extensively, both in the classroom and outside of it. The program has a strong focus on parenting issues and relates literacy activities to outside contexts through activities such as encouraging students to attend parent-teacher conferences. ReWA's literacy program and other services are supported by a wide variety of different funding sources.

Description of Literacy Component:

ReWA serves initial literacy students who generally have from zero to three years of education in their home countries. The lowest level class focuses on survival skills through themes that respond to student interests. They use aspects of the on-site daycare program as literacy lessons; for example, the list of rules for the children may become a literacy activity. In all of the classes, storytelling and oral history curricula are used as one of the literacy activities. Students who complete the program can continue academically in the beginning ESL class at the community college. Currently, the program is publishing students' folktales with the help of a professional storyteller.

PROFILE OF SELECTED SITE

Name of program:	**UAW/Chrysler Tech Prep Academy** **Trenton, MI**

Program Characteristics:

program setting:	Non-traditional (workplace)
student population:	Heterogeneous (Arabic, Hispanic, Asian, Eastern European)
geographic location:	Midwest (Trenton, MI)
program type:	Workplace
size:	150 students per year (25% ESL students)

Program Design:

The UAW/Chrysler Tech Prep Academy program offers reading and writing classes, math classes, and GED classes to workers at the Chrysler Trenton Engine Plant. The program is run by Eastern Michigan University under a contract. The reading/writing classes are small (less than 10 students per class), multi-level, and combine ESL literacy students with native English speakers. The program is designed to offer maximum flexibility to workers, many of whom work 10 hour days. Students are encouraged to come into the program at any time during the day.

Key Features:

The Tech Prep Academy program offers a good example of a whole language, student-centered program. The program exhibits interesting ways of combining various student populations, including learners with different levels of proficiency and native and non-native speakers of English. The Tech Prep Academy uses student goals to shape the class topics and the assessment procedures. In addition, the Academy is an example of a union-based workplace program. The small classes allow for a great deal of individual attention.

Description of Literacy Component:

The program uses pictures and stories based on the students' interests and goals to stimulate discussion. The teacher may then write key ideas from the discussion on the board and use that text for a literacy lesson. As students become more advanced, they write their own thoughts or stories alone or in pairs. The staff secretary then types up the writings and they are used as reading material for the class. Students who choose to can go through an editing process with the class.

PROFILE OF SELECTED SITE

Name of program: **Small Group Instruction Program**
Literacy Education Action
El Paso Community College
El Paso, TX

Program Characteristics:

program setting: Traditional (community college)
student population: Homogeneous (Mexican origin; Spanish-speaking)
geographic location: Midwest (El Paso, TX)
program type: small group instruction; workplace; other
size: 200 students

Program Design:

Literacy Education Action (LEA) is the umbrella program for El Paso Community College's ESL literacy efforts. It coordinates a number of literacy programs for people who read at the sixth grade level or below in Spanish or English. The classes in the Small Group Instruction Program include Spanish literacy classes for those who are not literate in their native language and bilingual ESL literacy classes for those who already can read and write. An "advancement" class eases the transition from literacy classes to ESL or vocational programs. The small group program holds classes on all three of the community college campuses, and evening hours are available in addition to daytime. Classes meet twice a week for two hours each day. The literacy classes meet for three 14-week sessions per year.

Key Features

The program uses community-based educators to teach its adult ESL literacy classes. The curriculum takes its themes from the community, and both teachers and learners provide input into what themes are discussed in class.

Description of Literacy Component:

The common thread that ties all of the LEA programs together is the Five Step Model, which features initial inquiry, a learning activity, language experience or other writing opportunities, reading in context, and a home assignment. This model is adapted to each program according to the needs and goals of the learners. This versatile curriculum framework combines generative themes and a problem-posing approach. The program provides staff development in how to use the Five Step Model in classes. The curriculum integrates a whole language approach, biliteracy development theory, and social context. The program emphasizes writing in many forms such as dialogue journals and language experience stories.

Section C: Discussion of the Nine Selected Programs

The in-depth research conducted at the nine programs allows us to shed some light on the questions raised by the data from the full 123 programs.

Ethnicity of the learners

As we saw in Chapter 2, the nine sites represented a mixture of homogeneous and heterogeneous language backgrounds: we had four sites that served learners from a single language and that combined literacy in the native language with ESL (El Barrio — Spanish; HMSC — Haitian Kreyol; El Paso — Spanish; Lao Family — Hmong). The other five sites all had mixed groups of learners (REEP, IIRI, UAW/Chrysler, ReWA, Project Workplace) although ReWA is able to offer native language support in its classes through the bilingual teaching aides. Indeed, at the other sites, selected teachers and other program staff may know Spanish or another language of the learners and use it as a supplement when it would make learning easier.

Table 13
Program Settings Selected by the Nine Sites

	Community-Based Organization	Community College	Local Education Agency	Union Hall	Library	Workplace	Church or Synagogue	Other
REEP			X			X		
IIRI	X							
El Barrio	X							
UAW/ Chrysler						X		
ReWA	X							
HMSC	X							
El Paso		X				X		X
Project Workplace						X		
Lao	X		X					

Program Setting

In terms of program setting, the major settings of community college, local education agency, and community-based organization (CBO) were all represented in our sample of nine programs, as Table 13 shows. In reading all 123 program nomination forms, we found that ESL literacy at CBOs tended to have more innovative practices than programs at other settings, and therefore they may be slightly over-represented in the study. CBOs typically have fewer strictures in terms of mandated curricula or approaches, and they are therefore more free to develop innovative practices. Whether CBOs were over-represented among the pool of nominated programs is unknown since we lack national information about how many CBOs provide adult ESL literacy instruction.

Certain settings are not represented among the nine sites. Although we did not include in our sample of nine a program that took place at a union hall, we did include the UAW/Chrysler program, which is now entirely paid for by the union and whose class site is on plant property. In general, we found it difficult to judge the educational soundness of programs based at libraries and churches since they tended to rely on one-to-one tutoring.

Among the nine sites that we visited, many of the literacy programs have responded to the issue of accessibility by offering classes at various locations apart from the main site. Lao Family offers literacy classes at three sites: a neighborhood center, an elementary school, and another neighborhood center. Project Workplace offers classes at the sites of about twenty different manufacturing companies. Literacy Education Action at El Paso Community College offers literacy classes at its center, at a workplace, and at various other sites around the city that utilize tele-LEA, a videotape ESL literacy class that is augmented by tutors. The literacy staff of IIRI teaches or has taught classes in a housing project, a library, and a hospital. REEP has its main campus at the Wilson School, but it offers classes at several other sites in Arlington county.

In general, based upon information gathered from the nine sites, each program does seem to have a program setting that is the primary site for ESL literacy classes and the locus of administration and coordination for the literacy program. Within one program, actual classes may take place at a variety of venues.

Program type

As we visited the nine sites, it became clear that our category of "program type" included a host of subtleties about the primary emphasis of the literacy programs, additional literacy strands offered at the same site, and additional services provided by volunteers and others.

Table 14
Program Types Selected by the Nine Sites

	Adult Basic Education	Workplace Literacy	Refugee	Pre-Employment /Workfare	Farmworker	Tutor/ one-to-one	Family Literacy	Amnesty	Other
REEP	X	X						X	
IIRI									X
El Barrio	X								
UAW/ Chrysler		X							
ReWA			X				X		X
HMSC	X								
El Paso	X	X					X		X
Project Workplace		X							
Lao	X			X		X	X		

Real life does not fit neatly into a researcher's information grid, as several examples will illustrate.

- REEP

  REEP checked ABE, workplace, and amnesty as their three program types (as we can see from Table 14). Our site visit confirmed that all three types of instruction went on, but the situation was more complex. There were not just three ESL literacy programs. As the site report in Part II indicates, REEP really runs three strands of ESL literacy classes that don't correspond exactly to the three types of programs that were checked on the nomination form. One is the general ESL program which offers ESL literacy in the beginning classes. Another is workplace literacy typically run at an employer's site. The third is the Adult Learning Center with computers and other technology, which is used by learners from both of the other strands as well as other learners who work independently. The amnesty component has been folded into the general ESL classes and is not offered separately.

- El Barrio and HMSC and Lao

  As Table 14 shows, these three sites offer ABE instruction. The programs all also offer literacy in the native language, but they are quite different from one another. El Barrio offers Spanish literacy up through and including preparation for the Spanish GED, as well as ESL classes up through GED and preparation for college. Although it does do some ABE instruction in terms of life skills and preparation for job training, the Lao Family's ESL literacy program puts a major emphasis on family literacy. The Haitian program is more like El Barrio in that it sees its mission as offering the complete set of basic skills including math and currently offers classes up through GED.

- ReWA

  ReWA gets refugee and family literacy funding from the state of Washington, but this does not result in separate literacy strands. Instead, the funding goes to support classes at different levels within the overall ESL literacy program.

Not only did the nine programs check several different program types, but three of them found our categories too restrictive to explain what they do. IIRI described their program type as "ESL literacy - small classes" and Literacy Education Action described their program type as "our own method of small group instruction." ReWA added "community education" to their list of program types.

As these examples from the nine field sites illustrate, different program types can give rise both to separate literacy strands and to separate funding of classes within one overall literacy program (sometimes with separate reporting requirements for students whose slots are funded under a particular type of funding).

Program Goals

The site visits confirmed that the nine sites all have well-articulated program goals. This is reflected in the close congruence between what they said their goals were on the nomination form and how they described their goals during our site visits.

Table 15
Program Goals Selected by the Nine Sites

	Work-Related Literacy	Family Literacy	Community-Oriented Literacy	Literacy and Civics	Life Skills and Survival Literacy	Basic Literacy Skills	Other
REEP	X				X		
IIRI							X
El Barrio			X				X
UAW/ Chrysler	X					X	
ReWA		X	X		X	X	
HMSC			X	X	X	X	
El Paso			X	X	X	X	
Project Workplace	X						
Lao		X			X	X	

Examples from some of the nine sites illustrate the ways in which several program goals are presented in a given context:

- Lao Family Community Family English Literacy Program (family, life skills, basic literacies)

  This program took a life-skills competency-based curriculum and overlaid aspects of family literacy (e.g., raising children in America and dealing with the U.S. school system). They also teach basic literacy skills, both in terms of reading and writing in Hmong and English and in terms of teaching the basic structure and tone markers of the Hmong language. In the classes that we observed at the site, activities related to all of these goals took place. In a typical class for the lowest level learners, students learned how to write a note to a child's teacher (family literacy) and how to provide personal information (life skills). The note was written in both English and Hmong and the appropriate Hmong words and their tone markers were explained (basic literacy).

- El Barrio (community-oriented literacy and biliteracy)

  This program in New York City provides literacy services for the Puerto Rican community. It has the goal of creating community leaders and supporting biliteracy. For learners making the transition from Spanish literacy to ESL literacy, biliteracy is actually modeled. The first two hours of class are conducted in Spanish and the second two hours in English. Yet, even in the English half of the class, the students may vote to hold discussions about a particular topic in Spanish but to write about it in English. Topics in the class focus on the community: students conduct research in the neighboring shopping area to see how many businesses spoke only Spanish, how many spoke only English, and how many spoke both languages.

Our experience at the nine sites indicates that programs are able to work out ways to combine their goals into one coherent program of instruction. The sites we visited, however, regarded their operationalizing of their goals as "in process" — no site felt that they had reached closure on how to combine their goals into one curriculum, assessment system, and set of classroom approaches. In fact, teaching ESL literacy to adults was viewed as a continuously evolving process at the nine sites we visited.

Approaches

The nine sites offer a sample testing ground in which to assess how various instructional approaches are combined within a particular program context. Table 16 shows the approaches that the nine sites listed on their nomination forms. Note that all of these sites said that they used a whole language/language experience approach in their classrooms. Since the nine sites were all judged to have something to contribute to the field, these data suggest that the trend is towards meaning-based approaches to teaching literacy to language minority adults. Note too that while six out of the nine sites included problem-posing as one of the approaches that they used, none of the nine sites used a skills-based approach to teaching language and literacy.

Table 16
Instructional Approaches Selected by the Nine Sites

	Competency-based/ Life Skills	Whole Language/ Language Experience	Freirean/ Problem-Posing	Task-Based/ Functional Literacy	Skills-Based/ Phonics	Other
REEP	X	X		X		
IIRI		X	X			
El Barrio		X	X			
UAW Tech-Prep		X	X	X		
ReWA	X	X	X	X		
HMSC		X	X			
El Paso	X	X	X			
Project Workplace	X	X		X		
Lao	X	X		X		

The marked diversity among adult ESL literacy programs is graphically illustrated by the data from the nomination forms presented in this chapter. Of the four major descriptors of programs discussed in this chapter (program settings, program types, program goals, and program approaches), the site visits confirmed that only program setting appears to be straightforward.

Program type appears to be partially confounded with funding source. Programs with more than one funding source may either develop literacy strands (e.g., family literacy or workplace literacy) that may be quite separate from the other literacy programs or pool their funds to finance the basic ESL literacy program (e.g., folding amnesty funding in with general ESL to produce civics for all students). In either event, such programs would be described as having multiple program types. We are not aware of instances in which one source of funds was used to provide several different literacy strands.

Program goals are typically related to program type. Workplace and worksite programs feature work-related literacy. Family literacy programs have family literacy as their goal although, as a comparison of the site reports for ReWA and Lao programs reveals, family literacy programs differ in their emphasis on adults or children, on acculturation or assimilation, on highlighting pre-employment or other aspects of life in America. General literacy programs often have greater flexibility in the goals they envision.

The instructional approaches chosen by the programs are perhaps the most surprising data discussed in this chapter. What they reveal is that there are very few "pure" approaches in use at adult ESL literacy programs. The best programs have generated a combination of approaches that work for their students and teachers and that have a coherence as an overall instructional strategy.

Chapter 4

Report on Research

As data for this research effort, the project staff drew upon information gathered in the literature review and summarized initially in the state of the art paper, meetings and conversations with our Working Group members, the nomination forms from the 123 sites that responded to our request for information, numerous phone calls to both practitioners and experts in the field, and three-day site visits to nine adult ESL literacy programs. Although they did not form a random sample of all ESL literacy programs, the sites we visited were selected for two purposes: to represent the diversity among adult ESL literacy programs in terms of program type, geography, heterogeneity of learners, and range of language and literacy approaches and to reflect and describe the best practices in the field of adult ESL literacy.

Our reflections on and analysis of prior research and current practice led us to the findings and recommendations presented below. We have chosen to direct our findings and recommendations to policymakers, researchers, and program people. More detail about many of the topics discussed here can be found in our handbook[1], our literature review,[2] and in the site reports in Part II of this technical report. While as yet there is not enough evidence to posit a cause and effect relationship between these findings and effective programs, we do see a strong correlation between the practices that appear in the findings and the programs that were judged to be the best among those that participated in the project.

This chapter begins with a discussion of why ESL and native language literacy classes are needed. What follows is an extended discussion of our findings and recommendations as they relate to the eight program components that formed the framework for our research. The discussion is organized in the same way as the site reports that constitute Part II of this report: program design, followed by the principal instructional components (curriculum, approaches and methods, and assessment) and other program elements (community outreach, needs assessment, staff development, and support services). Lastly, we discuss the findings and recommendations related to themes from the research, such as collaboration, learner characteristics and goals, and funding.

When possible, the examples and promising practices from each of the nine sites are identified by referring to the site in parentheses. The sites are the Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) in Seattle, WA; the Literacy/ESL program at the International Institute of Rhode Island (IIRI) in Providence, RI; El Barrio Popular Education Program (El Barrio) in New York City; the

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[1] Heide Spruck Wrigley and Gloria J. A. Guth, *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy*, (San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International, 1992). Available from Aguirre International.

[2] Heide Spruck Wrigley and Gloria J. A. Guth, *Adult ESL Literacy: State of the Art 1990*, (San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International, 1990). Available through ERIC.

UAW/Chrysler Tech Prep Academy (UAW/Chrysler) in Trenton, MI; the Haitian Multi-Service Center (HMSC) in Dorchester, MA; the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) in Arlington, VA; the Small Group Instruction Program of Literacy Education Action at El Paso Community College (El Paso) in El Paso, TX; the Lao Family Community Family English Literacy Program (Lao) in St. Paul, MN; and Project Workplace Literacy Partners for the Manufacturing Industry in Cook County (Project Workplace) in Des Plaines, IL.

In this chapter, each topic is organized in the following way: a finding from the research study appears first in bold type, a discussion often follows, and one or more recommendations appear in italic type.

Literacy Classes

ESL and Native Language Literacy Classes

☐ **The language and literacy needs of non-literate language minority adult learners are better met by ESL literacy or native language literacy classes than by literacy classes for native speakers of English or regular ESL classes.**

Traditional ESL programs and literacy programs for native speakers are unable to meet the needs of ESL literacy learners. Typically, adult ESL literacy learners have had few years of schooling in their home countries and lack the literacy skills necessary to move beyond entry-level jobs and to participate fully in English-speaking society. Many of these students are unable to make normal progress in ESL classes because they have difficulty with written language. ESL literacy learners are often not literate in their native language or have a native language which is non-alphabetic (Chinese) or uses a non-Roman alphabet (Khmer). These non-native students of English face two difficulties when they try to find places in literacy classes or ESL programs:

- Literacy classes and the materials they use are designed for native speakers of English and often assume that students are familiar with American language and customs. The vocabulary, language structure, and content used in these classes may not be appropriate for adults with limited proficiency in English.
- ESL programs often assume that students can read and write and use materials that rely on the printed word. Obviously, non-literate students will not easily be able to make the transition from no literacy to the printed word in English.

ESL literacy learners and their unique needs often get overlooked if the assumption is made that their language and literacy needs can be met by adult literacy programs or by general ESL programs.

Recommendations

- *Programs that have non-literate language minority adult students should set up separate ESL literacy classes for them.*
- *Neither the Department of Education nor the States should assume that ESL programs or native-speaker literacy programs can automatically serve the needs of non-literate language minority adults.*
- *The Department of Education should publicize and promote recognition of ESL literacy learners as a distinct population with particular language and literacy educational needs.*

- *The Department of Education should work with States that have significant ESL populations to include in their State plans processes for identifying adult ESL literacy learners and for providing language and literacy services for them.*

Program components

Eight Program Components

☐ **Research shows that good adult education programs possess the following eight components: community outreach, needs assessment of the learner community, program design, curriculum, approaches and methods, initial assessment and progress evaluation, staff development, and support services. Yet no adult ESL literacy program that participated in this study, even the most successful, was uniformly excellent on all eight program components.**

Quality programs tend to display strengths in a majority of these program components and therefore offer useful educational models. When research staff rated each nominated program on the basis of what had been written on their nomination form, we found that no program received top marks across all the components. Instead, the good programs tended to have clusters of excellent components (e.g., their curriculum, approaches, and assessment all appeared to adhere to principles of ESL and literacy learning) and other components that were good but not outstanding (e.g., they did outreach in a number of ways but it was not tailored to nonliterate potential learners). Given the resources available to the majority of ESL literacy programs, it may be unrealistic at this time to expect programs to excel in all eight program components.

Promising practices from the sites visited that could serve as replicable models for other ESL literacy programs can be found in the Site Reports in Part II of this technical report and in the project's handbook, *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy.*

We also found that promising practices that could serve as models for other programs were not limited to programs with comprehensive program designs or particularly strong demonstrations of effectiveness. In line with the finding that no one program was uniformly excellent is the corollary that even programs without major program elements in place can provide replicable models of some program components. Some of these promising practices can be found among the examples in the handbook and in this technical report.

Recommendations

- *When proposing quality indicators or program standards, policymakers should be cognizant that even good programs may not have resources to excel simultaneously in all aspects of program development*

- *Programs can use these eight components as an organizing principle for a self-evaluation to determine if they are making appropriate efforts in each of the eight areas.*

- *Programs can use the explanatory material and interview guides in the appendices of the project's technical report, Adult ESL Literacy Programs and Practices: A Report on a National Research Study, to guide staff development and program improvement related to the eight program components.*

Instructional Components

Program Design

ESL literacy programs vary substantially in terms of program design. Two designs that incorporate elements that are particularly responsive to the needs of language minority adults are native language literacy and community-oriented literacy.

Diversity

☐ **Diversity is the hallmark of adult ESL literacy programs and no single model appears to meet the needs of all learners. It is an asset to the field not to have an ideal model or one prescribed way of providing literacy education since it allows models to be context-sensitive and responsive to the needs of the learners.**

Programs that successfully serve ESL literacy learners vary considerably in terms of program type and literacy context (e.g., family literacy, workplace literacy, adult basic education (ABE), refugee programs). They also vary dramatically in program designs that respond to the learners' backgrounds and the programs' own goals, as the following examples indicate:

(1) native language literacy classes, that serve as a transition to ESL, articulated through a community-based participatory curriculum (El Barrio)

(2) group-based ESL literacy classes facilitated by on-site childcare, bilingual/bicultural support services and counseling, and easy access (ReWA)

(3) an umbrella program with a number of literacy strands of which one is community-oriented ESL literacy utilizing a five-step curriculum framework and a student flow procedure that moves students from initial contact through orientation to Spanish and English literacy classes and finally to a class that smooths their transition to more advanced education (El Paso)

(4) a competency-based program with three ESL components: structured instruction in

general ESL and literacy focusing on life skills, access to various technologies for improving language and literacy skills through individual learning plans, and a workplace literacy program targeted to adults not otherwise able to attend class (REEP)

Diversity of program types

At least eight different types of ESL literacy programs were initially identified (see chapter 3). In practice, as indicated by the programs that participated in this project, program type is not an exclusive category: about two-thirds of the programs report a combination of two or more program types, reflecting in part their success in applying to various funding sources.

How different program types are combined also varies. One agency may keep the funds separate and provide several types of ESL literacy classes (e.g., basic ESL funded by ABE at one location and workplace literacy funded by federal workplace funds at other locations) and another may merge the funds to support classes within a single program (e.g., ABE and family literacy funds both used to fund a family literacy program).

Diversity within program types

Program type or combination of types (e.g., family or workplace literacy) determines the orientation of a literacy program, and, further, within a single program type, literacy programs have different focuses.

For example, we found at least three different strands among family literacy programs and classes. Some family literacy programs concentrated on improving the literacy of the adults and introducing them to the American school system; other family literacy programs had more of a focus on literacy for the whole family, emphasizing joint activities of parents and children; and a third strand was family literacy with a concentration on parenting issues such as how to discipline children and how to help them learn.

Similarly, workplace literacy programs showed a good deal of variation in the extent to which they focused on the needs of a particular worksite or had a more general focus even though the literacy activities of both strands were couched in a workplace context.

Delivery system

A pluralistic delivery system for adult ESL literacy instruction exists throughout this country, and the project found successful programs implemented in a wide variety of settings.

The project's nomination process supported research findings that showed that ESL literacy services are provided by a variety of organizations of different sizes: adult schools (Local

Education Authorities (LEAs)), community colleges, workplaces (businesses and unions), community-based organizations, libraries, correctional institutions, and volunteer tutors (Laubach Literacy Action , Literacy Volunteers of America, Student Literacy Corps).

Among the sites we visited, traditional education providers that serve as umbrellas for several adult ESL literacy programs (El Paso, REEP), single ethnicity community-based organizations (El Barrio, HMSC, Lao), and multi-ethnic refugee and immigrant programs (ReWA and IIRI) develop and run successful programs. In general, non-traditional providers tend to be the source of literacy opportunities for some of the hardest to reach potential learners such as homebound women. In addition, we also saw specially-developed worksite (UAW/Chrysler) and workplace (Project Workplace) literacy programs designed for specific worker populations.

Some adult ESL literacy programs are part of larger organizations such as mutual assistance associations that provide a number of ancillary services such as counseling, translation assistance, legal assistance, health counseling, immigration counseling (ReWA, IIRI, HMSC, Lao) while other programs concentrate more exclusively on literacy education though often with a distinctive focus (community literacy at El Barrio, community awareness at El Paso's Small Group Instruction Program, functional workplace skills at the workplace literacy programs).

Program flexibility

Programs need to remain flexible in order to be responsive to their learners and to changes in the learner population. The very diversity that encourages program flexibility also makes it difficult for policymakers to compare programs across literacy levels and approaches. The challenge for ESL literacy, and indeed for all of adult education, is to preserve flexibility while encouraging educationally sound teaching methods and accountability.

Formality of program structure

The structure of ESL literacy programs varies in terms of formality. In most programs, a defined sequence of ESL literacy or native language literacy classes typically allows learners to develop greater mastery of literacy in English before moving to regular ESL classes. At some programs, the progression from lowest to highest correlates with a decreasing use of the native language and/or bilingual support and an increasing use of English in the classroom.

The timing and criteria for promotion may be more or less formalized. For example, some programs allow students to move to the next level only at the beginning of a new cycle and after passing a test or fulfilling certain objectives. Other programs are more informal and promote students when teacher and learners agree that they are ready. In several programs (El Barrio, IIRI, HMSC), the learners who are ready to move to the next level can "try out" the new class before actually agreeing to be promoted.

Diversity of organizations

In terms of a continuum of literacy offerings within a program, sites ranged from free-standing literacy level only, whose graduates may go on to training or to other ESL classes (Lao, HMSC, Project Workplace at some sites), to literacy programs that feed into community college ESL classes or vocational classes (ReWA, El Paso), to part of an integrated overall ESL program (IIRI, REEP) that goes up through GED (El Barrio). Like other ESL literacy programs, workplace literacy programs offer just ESL literacy at some sites (Project Workplace), provide ESL literacy to non-native English speakers as a first course in a larger basic skills program (Project Workplace), and give workers individualized instruction that could continue through GED and beyond (UAW/Chrysler). Classes that provide ESL literacy services can thus be part of a number of different organizational constructs.

Recommendation

- *Federal and State policymakers should continue to fund this diversity of programs since a number of models offer innovative and effective program designs and approaches to teaching adult ESL literacy.*

Native Language Literacy

☐ **Teaching literacy in the native language is a successful approach that is culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate for learners who are non-literate.**

The native language literacy programs that we visited (El Barrio, HMSC, El Paso, Lao) capitalize on the social, cultural, and linguistic background of their adult learners, many of whom had not previously been successful in ESL classes, by connecting students' oral proficiency with reading and writing. These programs in particular have been able to provide a classroom atmosphere that is both reassuring and stimulating, with teachers who validate what learners already know and challenge them to grow further. Based upon our discussions with learners at these programs, learners see the logic of learning to read and write in the language they know best before trying to read and write in an additional language. All of the students with whom we talked wanted to learn to read and write in English after they became literate in their native language.

Another model that is appropriate when learners come from diverse language backgrounds is the provision of bilingual support in the classroom. This model is successfully employed at the Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) where bilingual aides participate in classes to assist learners from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam, the Ukraine, and other countries.

Recommendations

- *Programs should seriously consider teaching literacy in the native language when learners come from a single-language background.*
- *Funders and policymakers should actively support native language literacy classes when learners come from a single-language background.*

Community-Oriented Literacy

☐ **Community-oriented adult ESL literacy programs (including but not limited to community-based organizations) provide successful program models for the delivery of literacy services.**

By their very nature, community-oriented adult ESL literacy programs are structured to overcome some of the barriers that adult learners face. They offer services right in the community, so transportation problems are minimized. Since they usually provide services other than literacy, links with social service agencies and counselors are already in place. Because they often include members of the learner community on the staff, they have the capacity for a built-in community needs assessment. Because the staff is often bilingual/biliterate, they are able to provide appropriate native language support for the literacy learners. In addition, community-oriented programs frequently feature active learner and community involvement in program design and curriculum.

Recommendations

- *Since non-traditional providers such as community-based organizations (CBOs) exhibit promising practices in teaching adult ESL literacy and can now qualify for "direct and equitable access" to Federal adult education funding under the National Literacy Act, the Department of Education should include CBOs in any proposed research.*

Curriculum

Types of Curriculum

☐ **Adult ESL literacy curricula are being opened up in new ways, and, among programs we visited, we find both *pre-specified curricula* such as competency-based instruction and *emergent curricula* in which curriculum topics are negotiated between teacher and learners.**

For example, in successful competency-based programs, **competencies are interpreted broadly** (reading a chart of children's names, when they get up in the morning, when they go to school, and when they come home counts as reading a chart), **taught in flexible ways** (the program has a set of core competencies for each ESL literacy level, but teachers are free to choose additional competencies according to the needs of their particular class), or **adapted to the specific needs of the learners** (family literacy topics are overlaid on a life-skills curriculum for refugees).

Programs employing emergent curricula often see the curriculum more as a process than as a series of topics. One such model implemented at the literacy/ESL program at IIRI is grounded in a structure that becomes familiar to the class and forms the framework for reading and writing activities (recurrent events such as writing the date on the blackboard, generating the class news with Language Experience Approach activities, reading the class news and using it as the basis for literacy activities). In each class, then, the curriculum depends on the interests of the students in that particular class. Another model used at El Paso's Small Group Instruction Program employs a five-step process (initial inquiry, a learning activity, language experience or other writing opportunities, reading in context, and a home assignment) drawing together problem-posing and whole language in all the literacy classes.

In general, a certain amount of flexibility with respect to curriculum characterizes successful program models. For example, at El Barrio, a teacher overheard during the class break his students discussing in the halls that one of the students in another class had breast cancer. When class resumed, he brought the topic up and asked if the students would be interested in learning more about breast cancer. Getting a positive response, he passed the word along to the program director. Eventually, all of the classes became involved in researching the issue and hearing invited experts discuss the topic. At the Lao Family program, which focuses on family literacy and life skills competencies, a measles epidemic galvanized the program into action since many of the refugee children had not been immunized. The key for topics such as cancer or measles immunization is to introduce the topic in culturally appropriate ways, to make use of experts and other resources in the community, and to capitalize on learners' interest with meaningful language and literacy activities.

Curriculum Development Process

☐ **At the sites we visited, curriculum is often shaped by teachers' and learners' input.**

The emphasis at these sites is on responding to learners' needs by asking them about their goals, and curriculum evolves as warranted by those needs and by changing approaches and methodologies. In a community-oriented literacy program, learners spend their first four weeks in the program exploring and articulating their own goals for language and literacy education, and teachers have a formal mechanism for giving input about themes that should be included in the curriculum. In a competency-based structured workplace literacy setting, teachers share with the students the competencies to be taught and solicit learners' input about what is important.

Some sites have direct student input into the curriculum. At the literacy program at El Paso Community College input from both teachers and learners is incorporated into the curriculum. At the beginning of the year, teachers, or "facilitators" as they are called, attend workshops to master the process of generative theme development via problem posing. In addition to discussing themes that have been used in the past, facilitators contribute new themes that are discussed and can become part of the curriculum. This "kit approach" leaves room for updating the curriculum in response to changes in learners' and the community's needs. Lessons and materials are then planned for both old and new themes.

Learner input into the curriculum is solicited in several ways. Students are asked at the beginning of each cycle what topics they would like to discuss. Since the learners and the teachers all speak Spanish, even beginning literacy learners have an opportunity for input. In addition, student representatives from each class are invited to the weekly 4-hour sharing/planning session during which facilitators analyze how well lessons met their students' needs.

Learner input is more formally generated during a four week Exploration Class that combines investigation of learner needs, goals, and interests with an orientation to the program. Facilitators who are members of the Exploration team guide students through a series of reading, writing and oral language activities that take place in English, Spanish, or both. During this time, learners explore their own goals and motivations for attending the literacy program, and facilitators assess the learners' language and literacy abilities via the activities. The information is collected as part of a portfolio and, at the end of the course, placement or referral is negotiated based on students' expressed goals and observed needs. In addition, goals or themes that have surfaced during the four weeks of discussion are brought to the attention of the Instructional team by the Exploration facilitators.

At Project Workplace in Chicago, teachers always share with students at the beginning of the cycle what competencies they anticipate teaching and ask learners to identify which competencies are important. At the Lao program, there are regular meetings between students and the project director about how well the classes are meeting their needs.

Recommendations

- *Programs, including those with a mandated curriculum, should employ strategies for discovering what the learners' needs and interests are and incorporating them into the curriculum. Guidelines from funders and policymakers should explicitly acknowledge that programs need to listen to learners.*

- *Programs should evaluate periodically how well their curriculum meets the needs of their students and experiment with the curriculum in an effort to match literacy classes more closely to the needs of the learners.*

- *Federal and state policymakers should be open to innovation in curriculum as programs try to be responsive to learners' needs.*

Approaches and Methods

Elements of Successful Program Models

☐ **Common elements, weighted differently from program to program, appear among successful program models: learner-centeredness, context-specific teaching, meaning-based approaches, knowledge of the learner community, and a supportive environment for adult learning.**

- Learner-centeredness in language and literacy builds on the past background and experiences of the learners (including literacy experiences in their native language) and focuses on their educational, social, and economic goals.

  For example, a **learner-centered curriculum** for a multicultural multilevel class may make use of oral history as learners tell and write stories from their own lives about subjects they all have in common, such as wedding customs or a time that they were particularly happy when they were young. A **learner-centered classroom** may use photographs from a learner's vacation as the subject of a language experience story on which the whole class works. **Learner-centered classroom activities** are linked to learners' lives outside of class as parents, workers, and community members.

- The curriculum emphasizes a particular context for language and literacy (family literacy, workplace literacy, community literacy, life skills) rather than teaching a set of isolated skills (phonics, the "th" sound, nouns).

  Innovative programs, regardless of whether their focus is family literacy, workplace literacy, community literacy, or general ESL, draw their **context from the lives of the learners** to one degree or another.

  Examples: A teacher may poll the class for what's new and work with the learners to write up their "Class News". A workplace literacy teacher may hear in the halls that one of her students is applying for a transfer and incorporate related topics into the day's literacy lesson. A program that emphasizes community literacy may have beginning level students talk and write about their experiences with gangs in their neighborhoods.

  None of the programs that we visited put an emphasis on subskills although spelling and grammar points did emerge as students asked what was the right way to say something and how particular words were spelled. Grammar concerns were recognized and acknowledged as they arose naturally.

- Approaches used in the classroom are meaning-based.

Almost 80% of the sites that participated in the project's nomination process checked "whole language/language experience" as one of their approaches to teaching language and literacy. Although a number of different understandings of what "whole language" means undoubtedly formed the backdrop, it still indicates that programs are moving away from an emphasis on subskills, often decontextualized, towards a meaning-based focus.

Examples of **reading and writing for a purpose** are the following: writing a slogan for a bumper sticker; reading or writing a recipe; writing a letter to a friend, a newspaper editor, or City Hall; reading a note from school or writing a note to a teacher; reading a story a classmate has written, a production ticket, or a paycheck stub; reading environmental print (Exit, McDonalds, Stop, Danger); and writing about something that happened or a custom from another country.

- Programs employ knowledge of and input from the community of the learners.

The most successful ESL literacy and native language program models employ frequent contact with the larger community from which the learners come whether it be the barrio in New York or Los Angeles, the refugee community in Seattle, or the workers and management at a manufacturing site.

Depending on the appropriateness for a particular group of learners, in addition to language and literacy education, there may be a focus on cross-cultural issues and skills such as working in a quality circle or dealing with technological changes at the workplace, communicating with the children's teacher and school, and dealing with domestic violence

- Programs provide environments that support learning and validate learners' life experiences in the U.S. and their native countries.

A significant problem in adult education generally and in adult ESL literacy too is overcoming the negative associations some of the learners have with schooling. Models for helping learners to succeed include convincing learners that they already know a lot (one native language literacy program has everyone take turns teaching the other members of their class a special skill that they have, e.g., making charcoal or crocheting); building self-esteem by pointing out to learners what they do know as opposed to what they don't know; reinforcing what has been learned in class by summarizing along the lines of "Today we learned about examples of Mexican culture in our community, about how to speak to our children about culture, and about past and present tense in writing."

Recommendations

- *Federal, State, and private funders should establish program guidelines that support educationally sound programs that provide a meaningful context for literacy development, generate reading and writing activities based on the learners' background and experiences, and link language and literacy to learners' lives outside the classroom.*

- *Programs should move away from teaching narrowly-defined and isolated skills in their literacy classes and move towards employing meaningful literacy activities.*

Approaches

☐ **Multi-faceted approaches to teaching language and literacy are the norm among adult ESL literacy programs.**

When asked to name what approach they used, programs typically saw themselves as using in the classroom two or three or more different approaches (e.g., whole language, competency-based, Freirean, skills-based, task-based). For the good programs, this represents an instructional viewpoint that has internal consistency and whose constituent approaches make sense in the program's context. However, the number and unusual combinations of approaches listed by some of the 123 programs suggests that certain terms, such as problem-posing, mean different things to various people.

Recommendation

- *Regardless of which approach or combination of approaches are used, adult ESL literacy programs should ensure that their program and classes are learner-centered and context-sensitive.*

- *Federal and state policymakers should reward program quality and encourage flexibility in program approaches, as long as they are learner-centered and context-sensitive. Local programs should determine what approaches or combination of approaches respond best to the needs of their specific population of learners and the strengths of their teachers.*

- *Programs should articulate a coherent approach to language and literacy teaching. Collaboration and dissemination activities can assist programs in this endeavor.*

Learner-Centeredness

☐ **Learner-centered classrooms, prominent in many ESL literacy programs, are associated with a variety of program designs and display different attributes depending on the context.**

Research shows that the operative question here is not so much whether a program's classes are learner centered, but how they are learner-centered and to what degree. The term learner-centered can be defined as being "based on the personal needs, goals, and interests of individual students." As such, learner centeredness manifests itself in a variety of ways ranging from comprising the heart of the program (the determination of topics for the curriculum) to suggesting part of the class topic for that day (students' bringing in materials for class discussion). Here, beginning with some of the most learner-centered practices, are some examples:

- Learners participate in creating an emergent curriculum.

  At the International Institute of Rhode Island, the curriculum partially derives its structure from recurrent events rather than a pre-specified sequence of topics. Recurrent events can be described as "occasions during which learners regularly generate writing, which can later be expanded into different kinds of reading materials, which might then be further expanded or adapted into more reading and writing matter." Recurrent events include dialog journal writing, generating the class News, and developing language experience stories. Added to the recurrent events are topics such as time, money, and clarification that cut across situations and can be taught in a number of contexts.

  Classroom literacy activity is organized around themes and topics contributed by the members of each class at each session as they bring in photographs of their families, talk about something that interests them, or respond to a teacher's question such as "what did you do this weekend?" As the learners share whatever they know about the topic at hand, the facilitator use the language experience approach to organize the discussion into sentences or a paragraph. This is typed and given to the learners and becomes reading material for the next class. Additionally, the facilitator may add open-ended questions thereby extending the learners' interaction with the content and with reading and writing.

  The curriculum is thus created through a process, an interaction of facilitator and learners, within a framework of recurrent events and cross-topics.

- The curriculum honors the traditions and skills of the learners and utilizes their experience.

  The Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) in Seattle has developed two innovative curricula that make the most of common experiences that the learners share by focusing on topics that transcend any one culture. The first is a storytelling curriculum during which classes tell, re-tell, and finally write traditional folk tales from their own countries. The second is an oral history curriculum in which the learners develop stories about their families, something that happened when they were young, or wedding customs in their native country. Both of these curricula are particularly appropriate for classes with learners from many nations.

These two curricula, however, provide only the framework for the classes, for the students themselves choose which topics they want to talk and write about. For example, on the general topic of life in their native country, some women may write about playing with their brothers and sisters and others may write about their grandparents.

- The teacher sets aside the planned lesson, so the class can discuss one of the learner's experiences.

  At the HMSC, we observed an example of learner-centered classroom in which the primacy of the learners' views, thoughts, and interests was clearly illustrated. In a class that transitioned learners from Haitian Kreyol to ESL, the teacher had prepared a lesson on the home which she introduced and explained in Kreyol. A picture of a radio on the students' worksheet led to a discussion of the types of music the students in the class liked. A pregnant woman in the class said she couldn't dance any more and she knew she shouldn't smoke since it was bad for her developing baby. Another learner said that she had smoked while she was pregnant. "Why?" asked the first leaner indignantly, and out tumbled a story about being pregnant in a detention center in Florida and not knowing what would happen. The story captured the attention of the class and became the substance of the literacy lesson. The teacher set aside the lesson on the home, asked the learner to tell her story in English, her fellow students asked her questions in English (with Kreyol mixed in), and English vocabulary words were written on the board.

- At the first meeting of the class, student input on topics that will be covered in the class are solicited.

  In the Small Group Instruction Program of the Literacy Education Action Center at El Paso Community College, the facilitator suggests to the students the topics that are planned for the class and solicits their ideas for additional topics.

  At the Project Workplace literacy classes at manufacturers' sites, the competencies that have been judged most important for the class are shared with the students. Students are free to say they'd like to learn how to make small talk, for example, and the teacher will try to work that into the class.

- In family literacy programs, notes and other missives from children's schools are brought to the parents' literacy class and become the subject of literacy lessons.

At the Lao Family English Literacy Program, notes from school occasion both opportunities for problem-posing (how should a parent respond to this note?) and for literacy (what words would you like to ask me?).

Materials

☐ **Most programs use learner-generated materials because they are guaranteed to be of interest to the learners and the level of difficulty may be more appropriate than that of other materials. Few textbooks are written at an appropriate level for ESL literacy students. Often their content or their assumptions about what learners want to know are at variance with actual learners' needs.**

In addition to learner-generated materials, programs we visited also have a store of teacher-made materials, usually developed around themes. A few ESL literacy programs use textbooks, but they do not necessarily use them in a linear fashion. Rather, they use parts of textbooks along with other materials for teaching.

Learner-generated written materials

Several of the sites we visited used learner-generated written materials to validate students' experiences and to provide reading matter in a context with which all the students are familiar. At the International Institute of Rhode Island, we saw students contribute anecdotes of what they did during the week or over the weekend to the "Class News."[3] The process for generating this news is the same each week and follows the Language Experience Approach: each student tells what he or she wants to say and then writes it on the board or dictates it to a scribe (who uses the student's own words). The teacher then types the news items into a format and distributes the "Class News" at the next class meeting. The class reads the news silently or aloud, and engages in interactive activities based on the news and its features (underline all the words beginning with 'p' or circle the days on the calendar when we will have class).

At the Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) in Seattle, we saw students describing customs in their home countries as part of an oral history curriculum. Using the Language Experience Approach, a student's story was first discussed, then written on the board in her own words. The student herself or other members of the class then read it aloud. The teacher typed the story and added some questions for the class to answer. At the next class meeting, students asked about words that they did not know. Eventually, the stories were collected and published and could well serve as reading material for future ReWA classes.

At the Haitian Multi-Service Center in Boston and at El Barrio in New York, students read authentic stories written by literacy learners at other programs, either via yearbooks or magazines that the program publishes or through Voices magazine.

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[3] For a description of the process of generating and using the class news, see Janet Isserlis, "Beginning Learners Write for Each Other: The News," in *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy* by Heide Spruck Wrigley and Gloria J. A. Guth, San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International, 1992.

Text materials used on an ad hoc basis

The norm at most ESL literacy programs seems to be to use text materials as the occasional need arises. This means that production tickets and insurance forms are used at workplace literacy sites. Separate stories relevant to each learner are used at the UAW/Chrysler site. Relevant pages from textbooks, that fit the topic being studied, are used at most of the sites. No program that we visited had classes that were limited to only one textbook. The use of textbooks was eclectic, and, in general, there was no core textbook.

Learner-generated visual materials

Because literacy students cannot yet read or write, visual materials in various forms played a prominent role in the adult ESL literacy programs that we visited. For example, at the Literacy/ESL Program at the International Institute of Rhode Island, photographs are used as the stimulus for stories: One student's photographs of her one-year old daughter's birthday party formed the basis for an LEA story about the party and particularly the food that was served. Another student's photographs from her family's trip to Niagara Falls generated an LEA story in a different class.

At El Barrio, as part of its emphasis on community literacy, students in one class discussed the meaning of culture and what might illustrate their own culture. The class of about 15 students then went to the traditional market in their neighborhood and took Polaroid photographs of people and things that they thought illustrated their culture. In this cooperative learning activity, students chose partners, with one being the photographer and the other being the recorder (writing down who, what, where about the picture). Reading and writing activities focused on the photographs then followed.

At El Paso Community College, students cut out magazine pictures that illustrate the themes they are studying. For example, students cut out pictures of handcuffs and a tattered picture of a girl to illustrate the impact of drugs on their community. At the Lao program, the teacher cuts out pictures of people from magazines, the students each take one, and then they write a few sentences about that person. Since the students claimed they did not know what to say, the teacher gave "story guidelines:" provide the person's name, her age, what she did today, what she did last week, what she will do next week.

Technology

☐ **ESL literacy programs that use technology (computers and video) are still largely experimenting with how to use it either to support aspects of language and literacy education and/or to expose learners to using technology itself.**

Successful models for video include using video with refugees to communicate content information in the native language and to introduce aspects of American culture, repurposing existing training videotapes for ESL literacy learners in the workplace, and creating industry-specific videotapes for language input and problem-posing in a workplace literacy setting.

Successful models for computer use at ESL literacy programs include rotating every class through a computer lab where trained ESL teachers link classroom curriculum with appropriate technology for each student (REEP), using computers for language experience stories either singly or in groups (El Barrio, REEP), and employing telecommunications to link literacy students at different programs (with or without a scribe)(HMSC).

☐ **Although many sites have access to technology, most still lack expertise in how to integrate the technology into their curriculum. There is a great need for guidance, sharing, and capacity building in the area of using technology with adult ESL literacy learners. In particular, staff development is needed to train teachers in how to use technology.**

- Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP)

Of the nine sites we visited, only one (REEP) incorporated computer usage as a regular part of instruction. At the time of our visit, REEP's Adult Learning Center had 13 computers of different types, as well as other equipment such as the Franklin Spanish-English electronic dictionary, language cards, cassette recorders, videos, and print materials. The Learning Center uses primarily educational software aimed at teaching or practicing aspects of learning English (grammar, vocabulary, spelling), plus general software such as easy word processors and content software such as P.C. Globe and Consumers and the Law.

The Learning Center is staffed by a team of 15 trained ESL teachers who also teach in the general ESL and/or workplace literacy program. Instructors assist students in selecting software and other instructional materials and monitor their progress; trained volunteers also help out. Many students use the Learning Center on a self-access basis and work at their own pace. This is accomplished through individual learning plans which incorporate an assessment of the learner's language skills, her/his learning goals, and the selection of appropriate materials.

The daytime ESL classes rotate through the Learning Center for eight consecutive days per cycle to do intensive computer work. The evening advanced ESL class uses the Center three hours per week. Teachers incorporate the use of computer software into their classes, often having students create their own learning materials such as LEA stories.[4] In addition to the regular rotation of classes through the Learning Center, additional instructional time at the Learning Center can be accessed by students. The advanced intermediate classes use the Learning Center for process writing at spaced intervals during the cycle.

The Learning Center is open on a drop-in basis from noon until 8:00 pm Monday - Friday, and from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm on Saturdays, allowing educational access to language minority adults whose schedules prohibit them from attending regularly scheduled classes. It offers limited English speakers individualized self-paced instruction which is especially useful for these learners. The students who use the Learning Center on their own tend to be higher level students (not literacy students). REEP does not recommend that literacy students use the lab without being enrolled in a class. Workplace literacy students also can access a variety of materials pertinent to the workplace curricula.

One way in which computers are used to supplement the curriculum for beginning level literacy students is to record students' stories in an LEA approach. The classroom teacher asks students basic personal identification information, eliciting "bare bones" answers. The students then go to the learning center and each student sits down with a tutor who goes over the same questions and serves as scribe by typing the responses using a word processing program. The tutor reads the entire story to the learner, and the tutor and student re-read the story one sentence at a time. The story is saved to disk and printed and given to the student, who is encouraged to illustrate it. Student have opportunities to read their classmates' stories. In more advanced classes, student might write reading comprehension questions about their own story. These stories are used as reading texts for students from other classes.

Computers are also used at REEP for more expressive writing such as dialogue journals and writing poems called cinquains. For the journals, student and teacher share a diskette or file on a hard disk and write back and forth to each other. This gives the student the opportunity for authentic communication and helps the teacher to individualize content and language. Alternatively, two students could communicate with each other through the dialogue journals. Cinquains are five-line poems with the following structure: Line 1 (1 noun), line 2 (2 adjectives), line 3 (3 ing verbs), line 4 (1 sentence), line 5 (1 noun). Cinquains can be used as a grammar review or as an introduction to descriptive writing or as plain fun.

Computers are also used for process writing projects, for information gathering from databases, for reviewing grammar, and for tutorials on subjects such as consumers and the law. REEP is also experimenting with interactive videodisc.

- Use of computers for literacy students at El Paso

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[4] REEP provided staff development in how to use computers and time for experimentation for the teachers.

At the Literacy Education Action center at El Paso Community College, a self-paced lab is staffed part-time by two facilitators and two tutors. The lab is used by at least 50 students as a supplement to other programs they are attending — the Center has a general policy that students can use the lab only if they are enrolled in a literacy program although some exceptions have been made. They have four IBM computers, one Apple computer, six audio-cassette recorders, and two video monitors. They attach an "Audio-Vox" to the computer so students can speak into a microphone and play back their own voices.

In terms of computer use, in general, a facilitator will recommend which of the available software packages a student should use. A member of the lab staff sits with the student during the initial visit to assess whether particular software is too easy or too hard. The lab staff keep track of what the student uses, how well the student does, and communicates with the facilitators via a notebook in which comments are recorded.

Software used in the lab includes a number of grammar programs, a language experience approach program, a tutorial program of key words a person might encounter on the job, an authorable program that allows students to hear words associated with pictures or text on the screen, some basic reading and writing programs, and two programs that feature the use of Spanish.

- El Barrio Popular Education Program

El Barrio received twenty Macintosh Plus computers as part of a grant from Apple Computer. The staff and students use MacWrite in Spanish and in English for word processing, as well as MacPaint and Microsoft Works. One of the students teaches an introduction to computers class that teaches students some of the basics about microcomputers. At this time, none of the lowest level literacy students are in the computer class, but one group of post-literacy students participate in it. There is some debate about whether or not to wait until students can read before starting them on computers. The director thinks that, when students cannot read, it is confusing to use the keyboard because they do not know the letters.

El Barrio collaborates with the Playing to Win computer center for the training of the program's staff and students. El Barrio wants to use the computers for more than having the students type what they wrote in class; they would like the computers to be facilitators of greater uses of literacy. Students have used the word processing capability on class assignments. A student who sold flowers made a flyer advertising her business. A number of students wrote letters to their families using the computers. The program has observed that students tend to work collaboratively on the computers.

- Haitian Multi-Service Center

HMSC has a "Study Center" which is used as a supplemental tool for language learning and writing development. The program has three Apple II computers in one room and three

IBM-compatible computers in another. The Study Center offers a language lab, supervised independent study projects, tutorials, computer-aided instruction, and a math program taught in Kreyol and/or English. The program offers word processing as an elective, but most of the lower level students prefer to take math. In general, the ESL learners, rather than the Kreyol literacy students, use the computers. The students use the computers to produce the HMSC newsletter and the magazine of student writing that comes out three times a year.

HMSC was one of the four founding members of the Boston Literacy Telecommunications Collaborative, which provides online bulletin board services and interactive communication opportunities for literacy students and agencies in the Boston area. HMSC employs creative use of this technology by having literacy students communicate with their counterparts at other programs via a computer equipped with a modem. HMSC learners have "talked to" learners at the Chinese American Committee and Cardinal Cushing program (a Spanish literacy program). An HMSC student (with or without the help of a scribe) can type her/his text into the computer and then send it electronically to a student at another program. Students tend to send Language Experience stories, send and receive editorial comments, and communicate about topics of interest.

- Other uses of computers

We saw no literacy program in which computers were used in the classroom itself. In addition to REEP, the Lao program has one site that had access to the computer lab at the elementary school where some literacy classes were taught. The students spend two hours of the twelve that they are in class in the computer lab. Most of the students like using the computers even though they use software mainly designed for children.

Recommendations

- *The Department of Education should fund three parallel efforts in research and dissemination:*

  (1) a Best Practices series on ways in which video, audio, and computers are currently being used to support language acquisition and learning, learning about technology, and teaching.

  (2) a Look Ahead series that would feature papers by experts on how particular "cutting edge" technology could be applied to adult ESL literacy.

  (3) a consumer series that would gather reviews of software from the adult ESL literacy perspective and give some suggestion about what programs can do with current software.

- *Policymakers should facilitate staff development for adult ESL literacy program staff in the area of technology.*

- *The field should engage in an informed discussion of the roles computers can and should play in teaching language and literacy to non-literate language minority adults.*

- *There is currently very little software designed for adult ESL literacy learners. The Department of Education should fund several demonstration technology partnerships between teachers with experience in the ESL literacy classroom and appropriate software developers, programmers, and video technologists.*

- *The Department of Education should fund research to investigate the use of technology as a magnet to attract adult ESL literacy students and keep them in class. This 'research would explore perceived and actual links with real-world jobs and measure enhancements to self-esteem from students' exposure to technology.*

Assessment

Assessment of Learner Progress

☐ **Assessment of learner progress is one of the areas most in flux among ESL literacy programs as programs, funders, and policymakers try to balance demands for tests that can be used to compare programs with calls to keep learner assessments program-based and learner-centered.**

Many funders require programs to use some form of standardized test. However, these standardized learner assessments are not sensitive enough to pick up the incremental gains of non-native speakers just becoming literate in English, and standardized tests rarely map well onto the curriculum that is taught. As a result, programs expend additional resources to create their own assessments of learner progress for internal program use.

The drive for program accountability has sometimes obscured the finding that, in ESL literacy with such diversity of program types and goals and no common definitions of literacy levels, standardized tests often do not achieve the requisite validity for some of the purposes for which they are used.

We now see among ESL literacy programs a trend toward continuous monitoring and ongoing progress evaluation through a process that not only integrates assessment into classroom teaching but also involves students along with teachers in making judgments about the progress that is being made.

Ideally, assessments should be fair to learners, informative to teachers and programs, and acceptable to funders and other outside stakeholders. Learner assessment is a complex issue because it cannot be discussed apart from other program issues. Curriculum and assessment should be linked since it makes sense to assess what has actually been taught. The form and content of the assessment reflect a program's view of language, literacy, and learning, whether these ideas are consciously articulated or not.

Most current literacy assessments focus on knowledge and performance as measured by choosing the right answer on multiple choice tests or displaying certain competencies. Yet, corresponding to an increasing emphasis on teaching language and literacy in context, there now is increasing support for assessments that try to capture changes in the reading and writing process through interviews, surveys of literacy behaviors and practices, and portfolio approaches. Moreover, we now see a trend toward continuous monitoring and ongoing progress evaluation through a process that not only integrates assessment into classroom teaching but involves students along with teachers in making judgments about the progress that is being made.

It is now generally accepted wisdom in education that no single measure should serve as the basis for assessing and evaluating all aspects of student ability and learner growth. In many adult ESL literacy programs, alternative assessments which are program-based and learner-focused already better reflect the content of the class than most standardized language tests. Individual projects now face the challenge of defining their vision of success and developing instruments that capture the changes that take place as language minority adults gain access to literacy.

Recommendations

- *Funders that require standardized tests should re-evaluate that mandate. Funders should take care to verify that the test being used is designed to measure what they want to measure and that it is appropriate for the population in question.*

- *Programs should advocate for better and more relevant tests while, at the same time, instituting alternative assessments that are more learner-centered and more reflective of the curriculum actually being taught.*

- *Policymakers and program directors need to support staff development efforts that (1) focus on helping teachers develop assessments that document the gains that students are making in acquiring greater literacy and (2) help train teachers in how to use the new assessments in ways that are valid and reliable.*

Assessment and Program Effectiveness

☐ **Learner assessment is intimately related to program effectiveness. Adult ESL literacy programs collect evidence of individual student progress (e.g., portfolios of learner writing, literacy behavior inventories, program-based tests, competency-based checklists, standardized tests), but there is a need to develop systems for analyzing and summarizing that data to show overall program effectiveness.**

Adult ESL literacy program goals vary tremendously, and there is consequently great variety in what programs cite as evidence of effectiveness: growth in learner self-esteem, new interest in children's schooling, continued education, new employment or better jobs, good retention rates, and long waiting lists. As a result, no consensus has been reached among adult ESL literacy programs about how to demonstrate program effectiveness. Questions about program effectiveness, particularly those that seek to compare across programs, will likely require more than a few years before they can be answered.

Questions about program effectiveness are inextricably bound up with program goals and assessments of learner progress. Yet the large number of sites that indicated that they had data on all the measures of program effectiveness on our nomination form raised questions about whether the field has a common understanding of how to demonstrate program effectiveness. Indeed, when program directors were asked about what evidence they would cite for the effectiveness of their own program:

- no program director cited standardized test scores although those affiliated with competency-based programs cited the achievement of competencies
- anecdotal evidence, rather than empirical data, was most often cited
- learner retention, recruitment by word of mouth, and the presence of potential students on a waiting list were all cited
- student outcomes cited as evidence of effectiveness can be summarized as learners who were more confident and more spontaneous at the end of the semester (they would argue, probe, brag about what they had done in class) and employees who showed an increased willingness to respond in English to questions and to initiate conversations in English

The adult learners themselves at the sites we visited mentioned that they had greater confidence in their ability to figure things out, they were not afraid to speak English and no longer assumed that it was their fault if someone else did not understand them, they were able to fill out their own forms and transact their personal business without needing the help of others, and they were now able to help others. However, as one of the program directors said, an increase in confidence may be evidence of a class's effectiveness, but it does not give the program much information about whether to offer more classes and what their curriculum should be.

Longitudinal research studies of program participants both within and across different types of adult ESL literacy programs will provide information to help determine whether particular types of programs are more beneficial than others. For example, longitudinal data might enable us to know if a program that focuses on community literacy generates more independent readers and writers than a program that teaches specific competencies or vice versa. These research studies should take into account not only program characteristics such as curriculum and teaching approaches but also student characteristics and goals. A broad view of potential learner outcomes that includes both literacy per se and indirect outcomes such as increased self-confidence or participation in children's education is essential.

Recommendations

- *Congress should fund and the Department of Education should initiate longitudinal research studies of program participants within different types of adult ESL literacy programs.*
- *Research is needed on what are realistic expectations for learners both to acquire literacy and to learn English as a Second Language.*

Program Effectiveness

☐ **The recent adult education forums held by the Department of Education generated five program elements most often associated with quality programs: full-time staff, individualized instructional programs, computer-assisted instruction, a full array of support services, and strong staff training programs. Yet none of these emerged as indicators of effectiveness among the adult ESL literacy programs we visited.**

Most sites had a small core of full-time staff that provided the continuity in curriculum and program administration and a part-time teaching staff who worked in the classrooms. Individualized instructional programs do not feature prominently in the adult ESL literacy programs we visited, and there is sentiment in the field against such plans as being in opposition to the social nature of language acquisition and learning. Although computers were available at a number of sites, computer-assisted instruction on a regular basis (as opposed to a drop-in basis) took place at only one of the nine sites. None of the nine sites offered a "full array" of support services or indeed as many as they thought their learners needed: childcare was available at three of the sites, counseling at several more, and none provided transportation. Providing appropriate staff development was an issue at every site we visited although some programs were more successful than others at providing what their teachers needed.

Several points present themselves about the relationship of these quality indicators and adult ESL literacy programs.

- Most ESL literacy sites are trying to produce quality programs despite not having the resources necessary to fund these significant program elements. Full-time staff, computer-assisted instruction, a full array of support services, and strong staff development are themselves associated with a strong financial base of support, which is not available for many quality ESL literacy programs.
- Further research is needed to discover how and why quality adult ESL literacy programs differ from other quality adult education programs.

Recommendations

- *The Department of Education should sponsor a program of research, hearings, and meetings aimed at discovering what adult ESL literacy programs (administrators, teachers, learners) consider meaningful evidence of program effectiveness and integrating those views with the needs and concerns of funders.*

- *Programs should have a process for setting program goals and a plan for attaining those goals against which their effectiveness could be judged.*

Other Program Components

ESL literacy programs need to support their program of instruction by publicizing the program to relevant potential students and finding out what the target community's language and literacy needs are (community outreach and needs assessment). In addition, the program needs to assist its teachers by providing some training in appropriate techniques (staff development) and to ensure that whatever can be done to assist students is accomplished (support services).

Community Outreach

Community outreach involves efforts to make the community of potential learners aware of the program and the services it offers. Outreach efforts typically include approaching relevant communities directly and establishing linkages with community organizations (e.g., neighborhood groups and mutual assistance associations), social service agencies (welfare, immigration, legal aid), area employers and training programs, and other educational institutions (native-speaker literacy programs, community colleges, schools).

For ESL literacy programs, community outreach effort should acknowledge that potential learners cannot read, have limited proficiency in English, and usually were born outside the U.S.:

- efforts targeted at non-literate potential learners should not rely exclusively on printed matter,
- whenever possible, outreach should employ the native language of the potential learners, and
- overtures to learner communities should be made in culturally appropriate ways,

Community outreach is an essential early step when a program is being started (so there will be students) and when a new project is added (so people will be aware of the new services). Ongoing community outreach is more necessary for some programs than for others, as the nine programs we studied indicate. In terms of outreach required both to encourage the participation of learners and to inform the community about the literacy program, the nine programs we visited could be categorized into three basic types: community-based organizations that found little need for outreach; workplace/worksite literacy programs whose outreach depended on the cooperation of managers, supervisors, and workers; and other programs whose offerings and number of students was more sensitive to outreach efforts.

In general, well-established literacy programs run by community-based organizations had very little need for community outreach since they were already well-known in the communities they served: refugee women (ReWA), Puerto Ricans (El Barrio), Haitians (HMSC), Hmong (Lao). In addition, classes were typically held in the neighborhoods of the learners, so prospective learners could drop by and observe the program for themselves. These programs always had their class slots filled and often had waiting lists. Most of their new learners found out about the program through word of mouth.

Workplace and worksite literacy programs are a special case since attracting learners to class requires the participation of both management and workers. Worker participation in the UAW/Chrysler program is entirely voluntary and done on the worker's own time. For this reason, recruitment is more of an issue than it is at programs where management gives release time for workplace literacy classes. The teachers reach the workers in a number of ways: They have made a video about the literacy/basic skills program offered at the plant, and it is periodically shown in the plant cafeteria. Additionally, the teachers occasionally make themselves available near the time clock during shift changes and talk about the literacy program with workers who approach them.

In the manufacturing environments in which Project Workplace in Chicago provides literacy classes, outreach takes separate forms for the management, supervisors, and workers. Often management makes the initial contact for setting up the workplace literacy program. But the program staff has to work with management to enlist the support and help of the supervisors, for, without their cooperation, the workers will not be comfortable attending classes. The workers are contacted via flyers and meetings; the more management endorses the literacy classes, the better the participation.

Other ESL literacy programs in more traditional settings (IIRI, REEP, El Paso) have community outreach that combines strategies aimed at literate and non-literate learners. At IIRI, the Literacy/ESL project devised a series of off-site literacy projects by determining need by talking to housing project managers, training literacy facilitators in the community,

Examples

Community outreach designed to attract students to a literacy program can appeal directly to potential learners by avoiding reliance on the written word and by using the native language. Other successful forms of outreach involve establishing contact with leaders of the community from which the learners come, contacting literate members of the community via flyers and advertisements, and contacting professionals who work with the relevant communities. These examples illustrate a variety of approaches that successful programs have used:

- **Bilingual presentations and announcements**

  At REEP in Arlington, Virginia, program staff make bilingual presentations about the literacy program to PTA meetings, bilingual parent groups, church groups, and other community groups. Other programs announce ESL literacy classes at churches, swap meets, and flea markets.

- **Making use of minority language media**

  Native language radio and television shows are directly accessible to non-literate people. At a number of programs, staff make appearances on native language radio and television talk shows to generate learner interest in their program. Literacy Education Action in El Paso is always flooded with calls after an appearance by a staff member on a local television Spanish-language talk show. Public service announcement (PSAs) on radio and cable television also reach non-literate learners. Other programs produce flyers in a number of different languages (one program had an even dozen languages) in the hopes that community members will make the information available to the appropriate people. Literacy programs write articles for ethnic newspapers.

- **Appearing at local community service fairs**

  Staff from REEP, whose main campus is at the Wilson School, conceived of the idea of using current learners to advertise the program via a videotape. The school made a video that featured dozens of current learners saying in their native language, "My name is __________, and I am from __________." They continued in English "I study English at the Wilson School. Follow me to the Wilson School." REEP set up a booth at the Arlington County Fair with the video continuously showing. Not only did learners bring their friends and relatives to see them on the video, but others were intrigued by the video and stopped by the booth to watch.

- **Sponsoring "bring a friend" days at school**

  Several programs had regular "bring a friend" to class day in which learners brought a friend or relative to the program to observe the literacy program in progress.

- **Canvassing door to door**

  Canvassing door to door has been particularly effective for programs that are just getting started.

- **Forming a literacy drama troupe**

  Several programs sponsor a literacy drama troupe. One program in Minnesota enacted vignettes on adult learning to promote ESL and literacy awareness among civic groups. The Bronx Educational Service has a theater troupe of students and teachers that performs literacy plays throughout the community.

- **Making use of community resources**

  Casa Aztlan in Chicago uses intergenerational and cross-cultural literacy to bring together Latinos and African-Americans.

- **Networking with other literacy providers**

  At a number of the sites we visited, program staff participated in literacy coalitions or forums with other providers of ESL literacy, native language literacy, and literacy for native English speakers. Concern for Literacy is a literacy cooperative in Providence, Rhode Island, in which adult literacy practitioners meet to discuss common concerns. The teachers from the various campuses of the City College of San Francisco hold a monthly Literacy Forum to hear about one another's work and to discuss topics of mutual interest. The Haitian Multi-Service Center was one of the four founding members of the Boston Literacy Telecommunications Collaborative, which provides online bulletin board services and interactive communication opportunities for literacy students and agencies in the Boston area.

Recommendation

- *Programs that wish to target non-literate limited English proficient learners should work through established community channels, do at least part of their outreach in the native language(s) of the prospective students, and should not rely entirely on written materials.*

Needs Assessment of the Learner Community

Like community outreach, an initial needs assessment focused on a community is essential for a new program or a new project. The needs assessment helps to identify what literacy and language education is required by the people in the community. A proper needs assessment takes into account the changing context of a community (changes in age, gender, ethnic composition, employment, neighborhood issues) as well as the educational, language, and cultural backgrounds of the learners. Needs assessment focused more narrowly on individuals informs the programs about learners' goals and expectations for education and literacy.

Needs assessment of the community that a program serves centers on getting formal input from potential learners themselves and people who can speak for them.

Examples:

- First language focus groups articulate the community's ESL literacy needs.
- ESL literacy students serve as members of an advisory group that meets twice per month.
- Input is solicited and received from relevant Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs).
- A refugee coalition is created by bringing together community leaders from different Southeast Asian communities.
- A participatory needs assessment includes input from the learners' student council.

Staff Development

Adult ESL literacy theory and practice

☐ **Many teachers at adult ESL literacy programs have not had specific training or experience in teaching adult ESL literacy.**

Current staff development opportunities are largely inadequate for the needs of ESL literacy teachers. Specific training in adult ESL literacy, rather than merely putting general staff development opportunities in the path of teachers, is needed across the board. For example, the heterogeneity of ESL literacy learners present special challenges to teachers, yet specific staff development for multilevel classrooms is often lacking. Even if all the students in a classroom speak the same language, they are usually varied in terms of prior education, exposure to literacy, and oral proficiency in English. Cooperative learning techniques in which a more proficient learner might be paired with a beginning learner are often useful.

Many programs do not have the resources to fund paid staff development and so teachers either donate their own time or are left to their own devices.

Recommendations

- *Programs and funders should provide special staff development for teachers in the theory and practice of adult ESL literacy such as introducing literacy to pre-literate and non-literate learners, teaching in a multilevel classroom, assessing ESL literacy learners' progress, determining the roles of phonics and error correction, and linking learners' backgrounds to classroom activities.*
- *Programs should use the third sections of the chapters of the project's handbook, Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy, to facilitate*

staff development on particular topics such as teaching approaches, curriculum, and native language literacy.

- *The Department of Education should provide leadership for the field by developing a program of technical assistance aimed specifically at teaching adult ESL literacy.*
- *States with significant ESL populations should use some of their Section 353 staff development funds, available under the Adult Education Act, for ESL literacy staff development.*

Program-based staff development

☐ **Program-based staff development, in which teaching staff participate in training aimed at the particular needs of their own program, rather than at general ESL literacy teaching techniques, is an element of most successful program models. Such staff development is dependent on having access to the needed ESL literacy teaching expertise.**

For example, at the Small Group Instruction Program of Literacy Education Action in El Paso, several different levels of expertise are available within the program. The curriculum framework employs a 5-step model for instruction, and the coordinator and team leaders train new teachers in activities and techniques related to the model. More than that, they provide readings and speakers that link educational theory to the different aspects of the model. The teachers receive training both in the philosophy of the program and in specific teaching techniques. Other programs might have a consultant conduct workshops on specific topics related to approaches used at the program such as problem-posing (ReWA). Another tact used by some programs is to initiate a special project, such as a writing project (HMSC) or a curriculum using oral history (ReWA) and to bring in a consultant to work with staff and students in that one area.

Recommendation

- *In order to maintain internal coherence in terms of teaching at the program, programs should provide staff development specifically geared to their context, philosophy, and teaching approaches.*

Need for Information and Sharing in the Field

☐ **ESL literacy practitioners are eager to share what they have learned from practice and want to find out more about theory and "best practices," yet many feel isolated and the field is hampered by a lack of vehicles for communication.**

Since the field is so new, policymakers and professional associations need to help increase the knowledge base of what works and disseminate the results widely to practitioners and volunteers. The knowledge base in adult ESL literacy should be increased by further research so that states and communities can make informed choices from the smorgasbord of approaches and philosophies based on what appears to work best for learners with particular characteristics.

Recommendations

- *Forums focusing on relating ESL literacy research and practice, such as those sponsored by the Literacy Assistance Center in New York, should be established and supported by professional organizations and state and local funders.*

- *The Department of Education should assist States in disseminating the results of programmatic research such as New York's ethnographic study of instructional methods for non-literate language minority adults and Massachusetts' work on alternative assessments and program accountability.*

- *Congress and the Department of Education should continue to fund the National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education (NCLE), the only national clearinghouse for adult ESL literacy. If the functions of NCLE were to be subsumed under a more general literacy clearinghouse, there is a real danger of losing sight of the needs of language minority adults.*

Staffing and Teacher Characteristics

Program Leadership

☐ **The leadership of a particular program director seems to be critical for the continued success and well-being of some of the most successful ESL literacy programs.**

A number of programs we visited benefitted from the presence of one guiding light (usually the program director) with a vision of what the program could be and a dedication to getting the resources to do it. Yet some of these same individuals that give programs their vitality are close to burn-out as a result of their effort to provide consistent programming under severe funding constraints.

In addition to their duties administering the program, many program directors have had to become expert fundraisers competent at writing grant proposals, seeking foundation support, and pressuring the city council.

Recommendation

- *Funding cycles for adult ESL literacy programs must be lengthened so less program* *time and fewer resources are spent searching for money and comprehensive long-term services can be planned.*

- *Funders should work with programs to ensure that administrative expenses such as insurance and the cost of fiscal management are properly supported.*

Teacher Qualifications

☐ **Many in the adult ESL literacy field would like to see qualified teachers who possess both background in relevant theory and teaching practice as well as in-depth knowledge of the communities they will serve. Given that not all teachers possess both strengths equally, some community-oriented programs put primary emphasis on bilingual capability and knowledge of the learner community.**

These latter programs acknowledge and utilize the teachers' bilingual capabilities as well as their teaching skills. These community-oriented programs often see acquiring language and literacy as a community process. They therefore feel that, in order to provide a supportive learning environment for language minority adults, there should be some linkage between the background of the students and the background, ethnicity, and linguistic skills of the program staff. These programs find that one of the keys to teacher effectiveness is their knowledge of the learner community.

Recommendation

- *Any attempt to require uniformity of qualifications for ESL literacy teaching staff must be accompanied by enough resources to provide the necessary training in educational theory and teaching and in understanding learners' communities.*

- *The field should engage in a robust discussion of how to professionalize the teaching of adult ESL literacy including teacher qualifications, program staffing structures, and salaries.*

Staffing patterns

☐ **Most adult ESL literacy programs depend on part-time teachers who often are underpaid and overworked, who lack job security, and who do not get benefits. Although programs and individuals can adapt on a short-term basis, the long-term implications of part-time staffing are that staff are subject to burn-out, the field loses good teachers and program directors, and it is difficult to recruit talented people into the profession.**

Adult ESL literacy programs adapt to the constraints of using part-time teachers in a number of different ways: by explicitly assigning different roles to full-time and part-time staff, by relying on program-based staff development to train teachers in specific methods, and by combining experienced teachers with new teachers. By and large, staffing patterns at ESL literacy sites follow the same trend as the rest of adult education: a majority of part-time teachers with poor job security combined with a much smaller number of full-time staff (often administrators or coordinators).

Teachers adapt to their part-time ESL literacy status by stitching together two or more part-time jobs either within education or outside of it.

Recommendations

- *More funding is needed at all levels for adult ESL literacy classes and teachers. In particular, funding should be made available for staff and teacher salaries and benefits.*
- *Funders should help to professionalize the field by funding full-time teacher positions.*

Support Services

☐ **For many learners, support services are critical determinants of whether they can participate in an ESL literacy program. Helping learners overcome barriers to participation in the program typically involves improving accessibility and providing support services such as childcare, transportation, counseling, and job referral.**

Helping learners overcome barriers to participation in the program is a key element of many successful program models. These initiatives typically involve improving accessibility and providing other support services.

Programs can facilitate learner access by

- using flexible scheduling (daytime classes permit parents to attend while children are in school, evening classes give an educational opportunity for those who must work all day);
- offering classes near where learners live (classes at a local community center can be attended by everyone in the neighborhood, similarly classes at migrant labor camps or housing projects can provide opportunities for all the residents);
- providing in-house literacy classes at the worksite (busy lives as parents and community members may preclude attendance at any other time; some release time by the employer is often necessary for the same reason).
- facilitating transportation to class (such as minivans picking up learners at their

homes) allows those with limited mobility to attend;

Programs can help learners overcome other barriers to participation by

- providing childcare (essential for reaching homebound women with young children);
- making referrals to social service agencies so that learners in critical life circumstances can get appropriate help;
- providing educational and employment counseling to learners;
- providing follow-through for learners who "graduate" from ESL literacy to mainstream ESL programs, vocational training, or employment.

Members of the community, the learners themselves, and counselors can all inform programs about which support services are needed by the program's learners.

Recommendations

- *At regular intervals, programs should make a systematic effort to discover what support services will facilitate access to the program and which will be most useful to their learners.*
- *Funders should consider support services as integral parts of adult ESL literacy programs.*
- *Programs should think creatively about support services since not all solutions require a lot of money. For example, learners in one program set up a cooperative childcare arrangement. Negotiating "student rates" on public transportation for the adult learners worked at another program.*

Additional Topics

Collaboration

Collaboration with outside agencies

☐ **Many programs expand their services by collaborating with outside agencies. For example, a community college may provide teachers to a community-based organization or social service agencies may forge links with literacy providers to meet the non-educational needs of learners.**

Partnerships between ESL literacy programs and other organizations (educational providers, companies) were the rule rather than the exception among the nine sites we visited.

For workplace literacy programs, we found, as expected, a collaboration between literacy providers (e.g., community college (El Paso), non-profit organization (Project Workplace), or adult school (REEP)) and the companies sponsoring the workplace literacy classes (manufacturers, hotels). A worksite program we visited had initially been set up by a university with input from both the manufacturer and the union (Eastern Michigan University/Chrysler/UAW); later, the program was funded entirely by the union.

In addition, we found that most of the other non-workplace ESL literacy programs also participated in some form of formal partnership: ESL literacy programs at several community-based programs that we visited used instructional staff from a community college (ReWA: ESL teachers and parenting educators from Seattle Central Community College) or university (HMSC: teacher training project at UMass-Boston). Another program maintained looser ties with a relevant university program (El Barrio: Puerto Rican Studies Center, Hunter College, CUNY). A family literacy program received help from the local school district in terms of both an ESL teacher and early childhood education specialists (Lao Family Community FELP: St Paul Schools).

Collaboration with teachers and learners

☐ **Collaboration in some form by ESL literacy programs with their learners and their teachers is the norm rather than the exception among successful program models. Under the general rubric of collaboration, we can say that participatory programs are characterized by sharing some measure of control with the adult learners themselves.**

The phrase "participatory program" means more than learner-centeredness or having learners talk in class. It is a philosophy that permeates the entire program design and treats learners and teachers as co-educators. While many programs regularly solicit input from their learners, participatory programs can be characterized by learners' ability to shape and control the program in some way.

In terms of program governance, a minority of ESL literacy programs give learners a prominent voice in how the program is designed and implemented. These programs are often found in established communities of one dominant ethnicity.

- At El Barrio Popular Education Program in New York City, program participants, including those from the beginning literacy class, are involved in all aspects of program planning and implementation including program governance. Students have full voting rights in the two bodies that control the program, the Steering Committee and the Board of Directors. The Steering Committee makes everyday decisions about program planning and policy implementation. The Steering Committee consists of two student representatives per class, the teachers, the counselor, and the program director. It makes decisions on curriculum issues, new projects, policy drafting, and personnel. Students on the Steering Committee, therefore, interview and hire personnel including teachers. Students comprise half of the Board of Directors; the other half are Latino professionals interested in the empowerment of the community.

- Four years ago, HMSC tried a formal mechanism for giving students a voice in the operation of the program by instituting a student government with elected representatives. The experiment did not work perhaps because students were not comfortable enough speaking English or perhaps because so many of the learners had full-time jobs in addition to taking classes. However, the program has seen that natural leaders have emerged as students have worked on the program's newsletter and the magazine of learner writing. In part, the amount of learner participation may depend on whether the initiative comes from them or from the program. Essentially, the program tried in the first instance to build a leadership component, while in the second instance leaders emerged when there was a real reason (in the minds of the students) for the activity.

- At the Literacy Education Action Center at El Paso Community College, the student government functions more as a self-policing body for the adult learners. Each class has a representative who has the responsibility of calling students who miss class to encourage them to return. When a number of student representatives reported that students lacked transportation to class, the student government helped organize carpools. The program invited students representatives to the weekly staff meetings, and, not only did the students come, they wanted access to all the names and phone numbers of students in the various classes.

In participatory programs, teachers also participate in program governance and often design curriculum collaboratively. The area in which teachers most often collaborate with each other and with the program is curriculum development. Models include

- Teachers develop the curriculum process

  At the Literacy/ESL program at the International Institute of Rhode Island, teachers collaborated with one another in developing a "curriculum as process" that employed a framework of recurrent events and topics.

- Two teachers develop a course together

  At El Barrio in New York City, the transitional Spanish to English class meets for four hours a day, with two hours in English and two hours in Spanish. Two teachers team-teach the course, and they decide together what topics they will cover and in what sequence. A good deal of coordination, largely on their own time, is required.

- The kit approach to community literacy

  At Literacy Education Action in El Paso, the teachers in the Small Group Instruction Program work out the curriculum together. At the beginning of each semester or quarter, the teachers brainstorm about ideas for themes They have access to materials on particular themes that have been used in previous classes, and they discuss whether new themes should be added. The program supports this process not only by sponsoring the workshops at the beginning of the quarter, but also by providing opportunities during the cycle for the teachers to go as a group to explore aspects of their community such as viewing public murals and attending city council meetings.

- Choices within a structured curriculum

  At REEP in Arlington, Virginia, the ESL literacy curriculum employs a competency-based approach. Teachers at a given level are required to teach the appropriate core competencies for that class, but they are also trained in how to choose additional competencies based on their own interests and those of the students in the class.

  At the Lao family literacy program in St. Paul, the program coordinator tells the bilingual teacher that they must teach the material outlined in the curriculum but that they are free to determine the best way to teach it.

Learners

Learner Characteristics

☐ **Adult ESL literacy students cannot easily be categorized by circumstances of immigration or length of U.S. residency, so literacy programs that are appropriate for one group of learners may not be appropriate for another.**

Learners run the gamut from newly-arrived refugees from Eritrea to settled Hmong refugees from Laos to Mexican-born Texans who have lived and worked in the U.S. for eighteen years. What they typically have in common is little or no education in their home country, limited literacy in their native language, and a desire to learn to read and write.

ESL literacy students include recent immigrants to the U.S., permanent residents (and citizens) who are not native English speakers, and political and economic refugees from all parts of the world. Included among the permanent residents are the estimated 2.5 million people added to the population through the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA).

Learner Goals

☐ **The individual goals of adult ESL learners are as diverse as the learners themselves, but students know when they are learning and what they need.**

As with other adult learners, the ESL literacy students we talked to span the entire age range and voice a variety of motivations for wanting to learn to read and write:

- "self-defense"
  A 72 year old man at the Lao program, told us with great pride that he was able to say "you're wrong" when a clerk tried to charge him $20 for a dozen eggs.

- "something she owed herself"
  A 50-ish grandmother at El Barrio told us that now she was taking time for herself and her own education after raising her own children, despite pressure from her family to mind the grandchildren.

- "independence"
  A woman in her thirties from the Dominican Republic told us that she wanted to learn to speak, read, and write English so that she no longer had to rely on her American husband to translate for her at the doctor's office.

- "communicate with family"
  A Korean grandmother at one site wanted to learn English so she could talk to her grandson who spoke only English.

- "better jobs"
  Middle-aged workers in several workplace literacy programs told us that they wanted to learn to read and write English so that they could get better jobs.

- "find jobs"
  Refugee mothers with small children in Seattle commented that they wanted to learn to speak, read, and write English so that they could get jobs.

- "improve skills"
  workers of all ages at one workplace literacy site told us that they wanted to improve their skills for their current jobs.

Students often can articulate when and what they are learning, as these examples indicate:

- A Russian student in one class we visited (IIRI) had sampled various ESL programs in the vicinity before settling on the one he was then attending. When we asked him why he preferred the current program, he told us a story about one of the other programs: Classes were held in a church with learners of all nationalities mixed together. The teacher stood at the front of the class and had the class repeat various words after her and would brook no questions. But, as the learner put it, the acoustics were bad and he could not hear her pronunciation very well. What that meant, he averred, was that, with an Italian accent on one side of him and a Polish accent on the other, he was never sure of the correct pronunciation. Rather than learning how to converse in English, the whole class was given over to repeating after the teacher words like "VEGETABLES, vegetables, VEGETABLES, vegetables."

  In contrast, the classes at IIRI are built around linking oral language with reading and writing. For example, students might bring in photographs from a family vacation. The teacher might get the conversational ball rolling by asking who is in the picture, then whether they are related to each other. Other students join in asking questions about where and when he picture was taken. Eventually, an LEA story is generated by the class, with one student acting as scribe. Grammar and spelling creep in as one student questions whether the word they want is "where" or "wear."

- In conversations with the advanced students at other programs, it became clear that they had definite ideas about what else they needed. At one program (ReWA), we heard that they needed to have the same teacher each day in order to make progress. They felt that having a different volunteer each class day impeded their focusing on the material. Across programs, advanced students wanted more grammar in higher level classes (ReWA, others) and asked for dictation (Lao) and math (Lao, HMSC).

- Many adult learners must overcome personal obstacles to attend class. For example, at a workplace literacy program in Chicago, one learner told the teacher that she was initially so nervous about attending literacy class after never having attended school that she was throwing up all day. A Puerto Rican man in New York enrolled in an ESL class, but he reported that the teacher told him not to come back because he could not read and write. Yet he persisted in his search for a suitable literacy class until he found the program at El Barrio. A refugee woman in Seattle came to class, with one small child strapped to her back and two others holding her hands, so that she could learn English. The on-site childcare at the program made it possible for her to attend class.

Lack of Funding

☐ **A lack of funding adversely affects the quality of many adult ESL literacy programs. Some adult ESL literacy programs have developed effective strategies for coping with funding vagaries by utilizing multiple sources of funding and diversifying their literacy strands.**

The nearly constant search for program support diverts energy from programmatic issues (such as being responsive to learners' needs), saps the strength of program directors (who often must spend time writing funding proposals instead of meeting with teachers and learners), and lowers the morale of program staff (who wonder whether they will have a job next month).

Not surprisingly, we find that ESL literacy programs, particularly those at community-based organizations, have difficulty building and maintaining momentum in the current economic climate. Funding crunches and unstable budgets affect nearly everything that happens at a program, from native language intake to classroom instruction to the capacity of the program to serve additional students to counseling. Lack of funding may mean that sites cannot hire full-time teachers, are unable to take advantage of technology, cannot provide paid staff development for their teachers, lack the resources to develop appropriate assessments, and must turn away learners because classes are filled.

For example, in the few months between the time programs were nominated and we selected our nine sites, one program we selected lost its funding (the family literacy program at El Paso) and another reached the end of funding for a literacy/ESL project with concomitant reduction in services (IIRI). Shortly after our visit to another site (El Barrio), a sudden loss of funding threatened the class that transitioned learners from Spanish literacy to ESL.

On the other hand, some ESL literacy programs are able to grow and provide more services primarily through the two strategies of piecing together a mosaic of funding and diversifying the literacy strands that the program offers. Both of these strategies are directed at making the sites less vulnerable to abrupt halts in service that might result if the program relied on only one source of project funding.

A number of literacy programs have chosen to diversify both the content of their literacy classes and the services that their program offers. For example, one site (ReWA) applied for and received state mental health money to support their bilingual counseling component and state refugee and family literacy (Even Start) support for its ESL literacy classes. At several sites, programs combine state and local monies with employment-oriented funding to help ESL literacy students develop pre-employment skills (refugee funding) or prepare students for vocational training (Perkins Act) by building self-esteem (a requisite for job hunting) and learning to express themselves. Another site (REEP) used amnesty-related funding to sustain part of the literacy program by integrating civics into the regular curriculum., rather than having special civics courses for amnesty students.

Another strategy used by programs offering ESL literacy is to diversify the literacy strands that they offer, so that the program's continuation is less vulnerable to a sudden loss of funding. For example, El Paso Community College runs a pre-vocational literacy program, a workplace literacy program, a JOBS (welfare-reform) literacy program, a video-based ESL literacy program augmented by tutors, and, until recently, a family literacy program. REEP runs a general ESL program (supported by local dollars and modest tuition) and a workplace literacy program (supported by federal money and employers) that is now moving beyond the one industry with which it started.

Recommendations

- *The Department of Education should work with States and other funders to streamline the reporting requirements for various categories of literacy funding, so that bookkeeping tasks do not swamp programs.*

- *The Department of Education should play a leadership role in helping States and direct service providers to provide comprehensive long-term services.*

- *Both Federal and State policymakers must build in funding incentives that reward program quality. The perceived capriciousness of some funding decisions (the unannounced use of different criteria from one year to the next, across the board cuts that do not take need or quality into account, systems that pit good programs against one another in the search for funding) is a detriment to the delivery of quality services.*

Part II: Site Reports

Site Report

Haitian Multi-Service Center

12 Bicknell Street
Dorchester, MA 02125

Executive Director:
Jean-Marc Jean-Baptiste

Director Adult Education Program:
Carol A. Chandler

> **"The program is teacher-centered; the classrooms are student-centered."**
> — Director of Adult Education

> **"Chaos is a chance you have to take [in developing a participatory approach to education]."**
> — Executive Director

Number of Literacy Students 60
(total of 380 students in language classes)

Key Components

- Kreyol literacy classes
- community-based educators
- bilingual teaching interns from the University of Massachusetts/Boston
- strong support services for Haitians
- bilingual/bicultural tutors and volunteers from the local and university communities

Special Features

- ESL literacy class to transition learners from Kreyol literacy to ESL
- alternative assessment
- telecommunication via modem with ESL and literacy students at other programs
- some educators are former students
- Student Literacy Corps tutors from the University of Massachusetts/Boston

Funding Sources for Literacy-Related Activities

- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. SLIAG funding
- Massachusetts Employment and Training funds
- Boston Adult Literacy Fund
- Association for Community Based Education
- Massachusetts Department of Social Services for childcare

Background/Program Context

The Haitian Multi-Service Center (HMSC) is a community-based organization that offers social, educational, and referral services to the Haitian community of Greater Boston. The center is the biggest and most diverse Haitian program in the Boston area. It has offered services to the community since 1978, and, in 1986, fiscal management was transferred to Catholic Charities of the Boston Archdiocese although HMSC remains programmatically independent. HMSC offers "an environment which is culturally and linguistically familiar and relevant to the lives of the students"[1] in which Haitians of all ages can find the vital services that they need. The adult education classes include native language (Kreyol[2]) literacy, four levels of English as a Second Language (ESL), civics, GED preparation, an External Diploma Program, and a Nursing Assistant/Home Health Aide Certificate Program.[3] The social services offered include maternal and child health education ("Sante Manman Se Sante Pitit"), AIDS education, counseling and advocacy, document translation, bilingual childcare, and refugee resettlement for Haitians from southern Florida.[4] This mix of programs and associated funding sources makes possible a wide range of services, but the reporting requirements of the various agencies form an "administrative nightmare" for those with responsibility for overseeing the Center's operations.

A unique aspect of the program is the commitment to education by and for the community. Most of the teachers are Haitian, and some of the teachers were at one time students themselves at HMSC. This experience gives these teachers a strong understanding of their students' needs and lives, enabling the teachers to present material highly relevant to their learners. The program's goal is to enable learners to take control of their own lives.

The Haitian Center is somewhat of a neighborhood gathering place. Students come early or stay after class to talk with others. Students are very supportive of the Center, and there is a strong esprit. For example, the students and staff of the evening program organized a Thanksgiving dinner party.

Student Characteristics

HMSC serves 380 Haitian students in their language and literacy classes. Overall, most of the learners are low-income and 40% are unemployed. Learners typically have had 4-8 years of education in Haiti, and some are not literate in English, French, or Kreyol. About 50 of the learners are enrolled in the Kreyol literacy classes, the entry point for most students who cannot read or write; about 80% of the latter are unemployed. French was the language of the educational system in Haiti, and, to the extent that the adult learners received an education in Haiti, it was in French.

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[1] Haitian Multi-Service Center, *Adult Literacy Midyear Review/Evaluation — FY '90.*

[2] This is the spelling preferred by the program.

[3] EDP is an alternative way for adults to earn their high school diploma.

[4] The maternal and child health, AIDS, and refugee resettlement projects all have case managers associated with them.

Program Design

The founding principle of the Haitian Multi-Service Center has been "Haitians serving Haitians".[5] The center is particularly interested in building capacity within the community in a number of different areas. The adult education program is guided by a participatory view in which the classes are learner-centered and the program is teacher-centered. The Haitian Center believes that education is most effective when it is based on content relating to meaningful context and is directed by the learners themselves. As a result, everything is negotiated with the students. The program tries to help students identify their needs and then works with them to achieve their goals. Similarly, for the teachers, the HMSC gives program directors the power to make decisions in consultation with their staff. Such participation is a very important aspect of the governance of the Haitian Center because of the history of dictatorship in Haiti.

Securing the participation of students in running the program has been more problematic. Four years ago, the Haitian Center tried a formal mechanism for giving students a voice in the operation of the program by instituting a student government with elected representatives. The experiment did not work perhaps because students were not comfortable enough speaking English or perhaps because so many of the learners had full-time jobs in addition to taking classes. However, the program has seen that natural leaders have emerged as students have worked on the program's newsletter and the magazine of learner writing. In part, the amount of learner participation may depend on whether the initiative comes from them or from the program. Essentially, the program tried in the first instance to build a leadership component, while in the second instance leaders emerged when there was a real reason (in the minds of the students) for the activity.

HMSC offers Kreyol literacy classes, a Kreyol to English transition class, and a series of four ESL levels. Students with no or very low literacy begin with Kreyol literacy, then move into an ESL literacy transition class, then into ESL I, taught in English. Classes typically meet on Monday through Thursday and are offered throughout the day: morning, early afternoon, late afternoon, and evening. The civics classes for those seeking legalization are held on Fridays. Classes are not open entry/open exit (except for SLIAG students), and most students attend one class, 8-10 hours per week.

Four years ago HMSC began the Kreyol literacy class as a pilot program started by a volunteer bilingual teaching assistant. The Center theorized that students would learn English more easily if they were literate in their native language. This was not a popular idea among learners, who were initially resistant to the idea of learning Kreyol. They questioned the validity of learning Kreyol when their goal was clearly to learn English. However, the classes quickly gained popularity. Last year the program added two more Kreyol literacy classes to keep up with the demand from learners. Even so, there is a three year waiting list to get into the class. Although the classes are now very popular, it remains difficult to secure funding for Kreyol literacy.[6] While there is an increasing awareness among Haitians of the need for Kreyol literacy, it is not a primary issue for most Haitians because economic and political issues take precedence. An underlying issue related to biliteracy is the desire by the program to give the Kreyol language status, to focus on the language that the learners speak rather than considering it second best to French (as was the case in Haiti).

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[5] Of a staff of forty-five, 90% are Haitian. Non-Haitian staff work primarily in the Adult Education Program.

HMSC offers four sections of beginning Kreyol literacy. Approximately 12 students are in each section, for a total of about 50 students in Kreyol literacy. There is an optional section of ESL conversation class for Kreyol literacy students, so students can improve their oral English proficiency while learning to read and write in their native language. Last year, most students moved out of the Kreyol component after one year or less.

The Kreyol to English transition class, which was offered for the first time in January 1991, has 32 students. When we talked with learners who had started with Kreyol literacy and moved to ESL, they were able to articulate how learning to read and write first in Kreyol had helped them to learn how to read and write in English.

In addition to the literacy level classes, HMSC offers four levels of ESL classes, classes to prepare student to take the GED exam, and External Diploma Program classes. The Haitian Center also offers electives, such as math and word processing, often taught by volunteer tutors.

Additional aspects of program design include bilingual on-site childcare, bilingual/bicultural tutors and volunteers from the local and university communities, staff/student mid-year review, student planning and involvement in workshops, community forums, and field trips. The workshops for students are focused on topics such as career enhancement, job search, and word processing. Guest speakers may visit various classes. For example, a Haitian from the Massachusetts Department of Health recently visited classes to talk about AIDS. At the Haitian Center, teachers prepare a curriculum in advance of the speaker. That is, how a topic is handled is decided within the program instead of a speaker just showing up.

The adult education program is designed to give students and teachers substantial input into curriculum and other policy discussions. As much as possible, the program tries to focus on individual learners' goals whether those goals are to read or write a letter in Kreyol, to follow and understand daily events through newspaper or television reporting, to transact effectively the business of everyday life, to earn a high school diploma and/or a nursing assistant certificate, or to gain admission to college.[7] The program tries to maintain flexibility and seek funding for new areas so that it can respond to learners' changing needs. For example, in response to students' requests, the program was able to set up drivers' education and math classes as electives.

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[6] The director said that it was more difficult to get funding for Haitian Kreyol literacy classes, for example, than for Spanish literacy classes.

[7] Taken from the program nomination form of the Haitian Multi-Service Center.

Instructional Components

Curriculum

HMSC has moved away from its previous competency-based curriculum towards a problem-posing approach. While competency-based curricula may be easier to teach, the emphasis at HMSC is on communication, which usually does not receive primary emphasis in a competency-based framework. The ESL program director feels that being able to communicate well is the factor that will allow the program's learners to move up the educational or jobs ladder.

In addition, rather than handing a curriculum to teachers as was formerly the case, sharing and communication among teachers has become very important as the Haitian Center strives to implement a participatory model and incorporate student experiences into the curriculum.

Approaches

Problem-posing is one of the primary approaches used in the HMSC literacy classes. Not only does problem-posing take advantage of learners' oral fluency in Kreyol but it also cuts across learners' traditional expectations that the teacher does everything. The program supports active involvement in a classroom setting as particularly important for learners whose cultural backdrop has been dictatorship.

Like other native language literacy programs, the HMSC Kreyol literacy classes use the oral proficiency of the learners in their native language to facilitate extended discussion of community issues in class. Since many of the learners still have relatives in Haiti and maintain their ties with their native land, there is great interest in developments in Haiti. For example, in a Kreyol literacy class we visited, the students discussed a situation in the Dominican Republic with which they all appeared to be familiar: Haitians, including children as young as eight, are lured with false promises to work on state-owned sugar cane plantations in the Dominican Republic and forced to live in very bad conditions. The students eagerly discussed the topic. There was a marked contrast between the clamor of a number of people wanting to speak during the discussion and the halting way that the same students came up with spelling for the first few words for the first language experience story.

In another Kreyol literacy class, problem-posing had fewer political overtones. Students read a short paragraph about what one person would do if given a million dollars. Then the students answered questions that related to the story (but were not comprehension questions): why would you build a school or health clinic? How can you help starving children?

The program places a strong emphasis on writing. Students keep journals, and writing workshops are part of the curriculum at all levels. The program especially encourages writing by underwriting the cost of publication of a magazine of student writings from all the different levels three times a year as a Study Center activity. Students on the editorial board — open to all — execute all stages of publication from solicitation of writing to word processing and layout to printing and final magazine distribution. Students have control over the content and design of the magazine. For example, a note from the editors at the front of the December 1990 issue says that, in response to comments, grammar and punctuation were corrected, but no other changes were made to the texts submitted by the learners from the HMSC classes. The program plans to use some of the magazine writing as material for intake in the future.

Kreyol Literacy Classes

The instructional approach for the Kreyol literacy class is based on a Freirean model using whole texts and generative words from themes and issues facing Haitians in the Dorchester area. Themes for class come from student interests and problems. The program has a list of words (themes) such as "immigrant" and "job" which they use to generate discussion. Since the Haitian Center offers a variety of social services to Haitians (e.g., pregnancy counseling and education, document translation, advocacy, refugee resettlement, childcare, and AIDS education), the program staff feel confident that they are in touch with many of the issues affecting their learners. They derive the generative word list from situations commonly faced by Haitians who seek assistance at HMSC.

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) is used to supplement the model, and some of the class stories are printed (in Kreyol) in a student-run magazine three times a year. In class, teachers write on the board the stories told by students, then separate the stories sentence by sentence. This technique works very well and is popular among both students and teachers. Interestingly, the program cautions teachers to watch out for memorization, rather then reading. For example, a student may dictate "My child is sick," which the teacher writes on the board. The student can "read" it back immediately but does not know the words separately.

The following examples of Kreyol literacy class activities were shared by teachers during a staff development exercise:

> The Kreyol and English sections were combined. Students asked for translations of words in English they wanted to know. They looked at the English alphabet. They went over the names of students' children and how to write them.
>
> The teacher read a story about a doctor. The class discussed the differences between traditional herbal medicine and Western medicine.
>
> In another class, students discussed the Gulf war and wrote their own stories about the war. They corrected the stories together, as a class, and then practiced individual words.

Kreyol Literacy Books/Materials

The Kreyol literacy classes currently use the book *Aprann Li* by Yves Dejean which uses a rather mechanical approach to literacy (e.g., the book starts with forming letters). However, the book has several drawbacks from HMSC's perspective: Since it was written in New York, it refers to situations commonly experienced by Haitians living in New York, but does not reflect very well life in Boston. Secondly, the Haitian Center literacy program tries to use a whole language approach which is not reflected in *Aprann Li*. A textbook from Haiti called *Goute Sel* (a Kreyol title which means "Taste Salt") also has similar drawbacks. To overcome these drawbacks, the Executive Director together with a UMass ESL professor developed a list of key words relevant to the Haitian experience in Boston.

ESL Literacy Transition Classes

The ESL literacy transition classes do not use the same technique of teaching syllables as the Kreyol classes. In both the transition and the ESL series, teachers try to use more of a whole language approach. They use more language experience stories in teaching these classes than in the Kreyol literacy classes, and bilingual support is ample.

We observed a transitional ESL class of women students. Both the learners and the teacher used Kreyol and English in their discussion. Rooms in the home and objects found there were the subject for the day. The teacher passed out a worksheet that had a word list on it, and the students read the words aloud. The teacher used Kreyol to introduce the topic and explain what the words meant, and the students seemed eager to learn the English words. The word "radio" prompted a discussion of the word "music" and the different types of music that members of the class liked. This in turn led to some comments on dancing to music. One woman who was pregnant said that she usually liked to dance, but she was not supposed to do so until after her baby was born. She added that she had learned other things about taking care of herself while she was pregnant. For example, she had learned that smoking was bad for her unborn child. Another woman was not so sure that smoking while pregnant was bad since she had done it. "Why would you do that," asked one of her classmates. And she answered that she did it because she was upset about her immigration problems. She then shared with the class her story of being in a detention center in Florida for eight months and not knowing when or if she would get out. People nodded knowingly as the detention center and its conditions were discussed. As the women got excited, they switched to speaking in Kreyol, and the teacher reminded them several times to say it "in English." During the discussion the teacher wrote on the board new English words that emerged as the learners talked: fence, hospital, 9 months, outside.

This class illustrated a number of points that can offer guidance to ESL literacy teachers:

- Most importantly, the teacher was able to let go of her lesson plan and essentially let the students pursue the discussion once they began on a topic that was of paramount interest to them.

- The teacher listened carefully and wrote on the board new words that came up in the discussion.

- Grammar and/or language awareness surfaced during the class several times during the discussion of music. The teacher

    - pointed out that one says "she likes" not "she like"
    - took the opportunity to discuss contractions briefly after one student said "I don't like Jamaican music"
    - responded to a student request for clarification about whether one says in English "she has a pain" or "she got a pain"

- Individual students also participated by writing on the board various words and phrases that they had just used in the discussion (often their classmates volunteered corrections to the spelling).

ESL Classes

The whole language approach is used in the various levels of ESL classes. Students write in dialogue journals as a class activity. In responding, the teachers focus on content and not error correction. That is, they prefer to respond in correct English and let the students learn from that rather than draw attention to mistakes that the student might have made. In Kreyol literacy classes as in ESL classes, encouragement is always given for student expression through writing.

Classroom observation

In the ESL I class that we observed, the teacher used Kreyol in explanations for the learners. The students in the class had learned to read and write in the Kreyol literacy class, and therefore a lot of translation was used to communicate meaning. Some of the learners did not know much grammar, and therefore two days a week the class does a mini-unit on grammar or verbs. The teacher had chosen the focus based on what the learners needed as an outgrowth of the reading. That is, she focused on what they did not seem to understand.

During the first part of class, the teacher asked the ten learners in the class to write sentences using possessive pronouns, a task similar to one they had done a week or so earlier. The teacher circulated through the room and helped various people with their sentences. She asked comprehension questions such as "have you ended the sentence? what happened?" Interestingly, the teacher asked the students to think about what the corresponding possessive pronoun would be in French (not Kreyol) since some of those in the class had been to elementary school in Haiti and learned French there. In keeping with the collaborative design of the program, students were given sentences they had written the week before to compare with the sentences they wrote that day. Students could see their own progress and build metacognitive awareness of why they were doing what they were doing. The teacher told us that she took it as a sign of progress that learners used possessive pronouns in the middle of sentences that day whereas their previous attempts had used the possessive pronoun as the first word of the sentence.

As we had observed elsewhere, student questions led to clarification of grammar points: one student was confused about the difference between "he is" and "his." This led to discussion of those two construction as well as "he's." Language awareness was facilitated through the first language (and second language, French). Kreyol was used to explain why things worked a certain way in English. However the explanation was not entirely successful: The pronunciation of the three forms sounded so similar that some students were still confused about the fact that they had different meanings. Rather than continue with the grammar until everyone understood, the teacher dropped it with the intention of coming back to it another day.

The class then switched activities to read a story from *Voices* magazine written by a South African woman. The teacher asked for volunteers to read, and, as one man read, his classmates and/or the teacher corrected his pronunciation. Another person volunteered to read, then the teacher read the story aloud while the class followed along in their copies. After several rounds of reading the story aloud, the teacher asked who wanted to explain what the story was about. Students took turns explaining aspects of the story in Kreyol, English, or both. The teacher then asked if there were any words that students did not understand. When one person said "struggle," the teacher asked what she thought it might mean. After some discussion, the teacher wrote struggle=hard work on the board and asked what other types of struggle there were besides those discussed in the story. The teacher connected the story with their experience by asking if that could ever happen in Boston. Finally, the students wrote answers to a set of five questions that the teacher had prepared about the story.

The teacher gave the following examples of changes that she had observed in the six months she has taught these learners:

- students who were once too afraid to speak in English because they feared that people could not understand them now spoke quite freely
- students acted more confident which she attributed to their knowing that they can learn
- students who had been afraid to read aloud now did it
- students now answered questions and were able to make up their own questions

- students have learned the verbs "to be" and "to have"

One of the students in the class told us that his boss asked him if he was going to school because he used the word "has" in conversation, a word that he had not used before.

Multilevel Classes

Classes are multilevel, particularly at the literacy level of the program. Adding the transition class has helped to lessen the multilevel aspect of the Kreyol literacy and ESL I classes. Strategies for working with multilevel classes include asking higher-level students to work with others (cooperative learning) and using the language experience approach which allows those of different proficiency levels to assume different roles.

One approach that works well with multilevel classrooms is to give students a Polaroid camera and have them take pictures of interest to them. They might choose to photograph a church, school, gas station, or people like store owners or doctors. Non-literate students might well serve as a photographer or as a selector of subjects. Once back in class, one picture is selected for discussion. The students discuss what they see and what its impact on the Haitian community is. From the picture, a story is generated in one of two ways: either every student contributes a sentence or the class summarizes the whole group's story. Either way, the skills of students at a variety of levels are used.

Initial Assessment

Initial assessment consists of the following steps:

1. Staff orally interviews a potential learner in Kreyol and also in English if the learner speaks English.

2. The learner fills out a personal information form in either English or French (not Kreyol).

3. The learner is given materials in English, French, or Kreyol and is asked to read a short paragraph in any of the three languages.

Program staff judge the learner's performance on these three tasks. Learners who are unable to read or write or do so with great difficulty are placed in the Kreyol literacy class. After placement, the class teacher interviews each student and uses a variety of assessment measures to confirm that the learner is in the proper class. No standardized tests are used for initial assessment.

The full-time counselor meets with each student when she/he enters the program to discuss goals and to establish realistic potential outcomes.

Assessment

Learner Progress in Kreyol Literacy

For assessment purposes, each student keeps a notebook of his/her work and regularly adds new writing entries. There are mid-year and final student evaluations by the instructor. The teacher and student together decide when an individual student is ready for the next class. They do not use any standardized assessments.

Learner Progress in ESL

Progress is assessed through several different measures. Teachers hold conferences with students at the midterm and at the end of the year. They keep portfolios of each student's work which they judge holistically according to language skills performance benchmarks developed by the ESL program. Students do self-assessments regarding their outside use of language and literacy (e.g., read a letter from a family member, asked for a raise, understood something on radio). Finally, the teacher and student assess the student's progress through an individual review of how well goals have been met; teacher and student decide together if the student is ready to move up to the next class.

Indicators of Progress

Program staff cited the following as informal indicators of learners' progress:

- increased levels of participation in class
- improved handwriting
- changes in reading: can read faster and can read more difficult prose
- comparing first and last pages of notebook shows improvement in writing skills

Program Assessment

The program assesses itself in a number of ways during the year. For example, there is a formal mid-year review of the level descriptions. In addition, students provide evaluations of classes and the program, and the program pays attention to them. The ESL program director and the counselor go around and talk to all the classes and get feedback from them. This information is then shared with the teachers.

Educational Transitions

Some students go all the way through the ESL series of classes to the GED class. They can study for their GED or External Diploma Program (EDP) diploma at HMSC. They can then go to community college.

Other Program Components

Community Outreach

HMSC is located in a neighborhood with a large Haitian community and is well-known there, having served the people of the neighborhood for more than a decade. In general, the Haitian people of the area look to HMSC for leadership and want to know what the center has to say on important issues. Like most other community-based programs, word of mouth is the best advertisement for the HMSC literacy and ESL classes. The center does produce flyers from time to time when special events are scheduled.

The program has established linkages with other schools and programs that serve the Haitian community: Lee school, a community school deeply rooted in the community; South End Adults at Cathedral, a skill training program geared towards minorities; and the University of Massachusetts at Boston, which has a large number of Haitian students.

Needs Assessment

The majority of the staff at HMSC are either Haitian or community residents. As such, they are familiar with the economic, social, and political issues facing the learners who attend classes at the program.

Program Staff

Most of the teaching staff are either Haitian or bilingual in English/Kreyol, and many come from the local Haitian community. Several are graduates of HMSC's education programs themselves. One of the two Kreyol literacy teachers is a former student of the program. It is part of the overall program design at HMSC that they employ teachers who understand the needs of the learners and the context of their lives. Often the teachers themselves are part of the local Haitian community.

When hiring new teachers, the adult education program director looks for those who have some connection to the Haitian community, a knowledge of third world culture, experience in teaching, and a willingness to be flexible about hours, courses taught, and responsibilities.

The program has developed a number of full-time instructional staff positions, but part-time teachers are still essential for staffing the twenty literacy and ESL classes that are offered daily.[8] Most of the teachers have taught at the Haitian Center for three or more years, but some of them are finding that they need a break because teaching at HMSC demands such a lot of energy. Some of them first came to HMSC as volunteers or interns and stayed. The teaching staff work as teams in a participatory way with an emphasis on sharing and group decisions; those with authority typically do not assert it.

The Haitian Center is one of three sites benefitting from the Bilingual Community Literacy Training project at the University of Massachusetts/Boston (UMass/Boston), funded by a Title VII short-term training grant. The goal of the project is to train people from the community of the learners to teach literacy. Four student interns and one master teacher from the teacher training project taught at HMSC when we visited. Elsa Auerbach, a professor in the ESL/Bilingual graduate program, serves as the University of Massachusetts/Boston liaison and program coordinator. The interns teach approximately eight of the twenty language classes offered.

The project utilizes three contexts for the staff development of the teaching interns. In the classroom, there is side by side learning as an intern is paired with an experienced teacher. In site-based weekly meetings, the interns talk about issues, share materials, and discuss problems. Minutes are kept of these meetings and are accessible to all. Third, the interns from all three native language literacy programs meet in a workshop to discuss teaching practices once a month. These sessions offer the opportunity for exchange of information between sites, for more formal presentation of ideas, and for trying out something new.

Volunteers

HMSC uses volunteers from the UMass/Boston Student Literacy Corps program. Under this program, undergraduates enroll in a two-course sequence featuring a content-based ESL course about language and literacy and a fieldwork seminar consisting of 4 or more hours per week of tutoring in the community. The adult education director at HMSC is a professor at the University and teaches the Student Literacy Corps class.

HMSC has four Haitian tutors and one American through the Student Literacy Corps program. Tutors work on teaching word processing, improving writing skills with the ESL II group, staffing the language lab, and providing math instruction. The American tutor works in the English conversation section to help learners improve their pronunciation. The volunteers are assigned to a particular teacher. They are all bilingual and very committed to helping the Haitian learners.

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[8] The full-time positions provide support for key staff such as the director of adult education, the master teacher for the teaching interns, and the counselor, who combine instructional, administrative, and program development responsibilities. The part-time teachers often have jobs elsewhere: the master teacher for Kreyol literacy has a radio show. Another of the teachers works 20 hours per week elsewhere teaching ESL literacy.

HMSC also has some work-study students from the university and offers internships to other students.

Staff Development

The staff development model in use at HMSC was developed in collaboration with the UMass Training Project. The model includes formal sharing sessions in which all of the ESL teachers meet together once a week and share teaching experiences.[9] These meetings are expressly designed to provide in-house training by encouraging teachers to reflect upon their practice. Themes usually emerge from the discussions. Examples of such themes are the use of translation in class and the issue of how to handle error correction. The challenge for the program is to build professionalism among the teaching staff who may not have too much background in teaching techniques. For example, the program would like to move the teachers away from an emphasis on grammar and towards more problem-posing. The program seeks a balance between a skills-based and a meaning-based approach.

The teachers for the transitional ESL class meet with the Kreyol literacy teachers on a regular basis to share classroom experiences. In this manner, the teachers are aware of students' progress in the previous or following level and can better serve the students.

Teachers are encouraged to attend off-site workshops and meetings, although funding such activities is a problem for HMSC. The organization tries to pay for travel. On-site the program brings in outside consultants who are literacy or other community-based educators to give workshops on specific topics. The consultants have included people from the Association for Community Based Education (ACBE) (Washington, DC), The Network Inc. (Andover, MA), and the Adult Literacy Resource Institute (Boston, MA). Bringing the consultants to the program was funded by a mini-grant from the ACBE.

Support Services

The program is easily accessible by public transportation, but most learners either live nearby or drive to the center. Through its social services, HMSC offers many community support services including:

- individual educational and vocational counseling
- community resource referrals

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[9] These meetings usually take place Friday afternoons and include all of the adult education staff except the interns. The interns meet as a group on Friday mornings.

- immigration counseling
- helping refugees resettle from Miami to Boston, provide housing.
- pregnancy education and outreach
- bilingual childcare -- free for refugee students, available to all
- AIDS education and support for HIV positive people
- document translation

Technology

HMSC has a "Study Center" which is used as a supplemental tool for language learning and writing development. The program has three Apple II computers in one room and three IBM-compatible computers in another. The Study Center offers a language lab, supervised independent study projects, tutorials, computer-aided instruction, and a math program taught in Kreyol and/or English. The program offers word processing as an elective, but most of the lower level students prefer to take math. In general, the ESL learners, rather than the Kreyol literacy students, use the computers.

The students use the computers to produce the HMSC newsletter and the magazine of student writing that comes out three times a year.

HMSC was one of the four founding members of the Boston Literacy Telecommunications Collaborative which provides online bulletin board services and interactive communication opportunities for literacy students and agencies in the Boston area. HMSC employs creative use of this technology by having literacy students communicate with their counterparts at other programs via a computer equipped with a modem. HMSC learners have "talked to" learners at the Chinese American Committee and Cardinal Cushing program (a Spanish literacy program). An HMSC student (with or without the help of a scribe) can type her/his text into the computer and then send it electronically to a student at another program. Students tend to send Language Experience stories, send and receive editorial comments, and communicate about topics of interest.

The program staff have mixed feelings about the introduction of computers into the program, but the students are enthusiastic as the following story illustrates: A literacy learner came into the Study Center as the teacher in charge was just logging on to the bulletin board system of the Boston Literacy Telecommunications Collaborative. With the teacher acting as scribe for the student, they initiated a conversation with a literacy student at another program. The students sent comments back and forth about the weather and how they liked Boston. After fifteen or so minutes, the Haitian student sent the message that she had to stop now so that she could eat lunch. The student at the other end said that she was hungry too and would the Haitian student please get her a hamburger. Then the students and their scribes logged off. Afterwards, the Haitian student told the teacher that she did not know that computers could eat. It turned out that the student thought she had been talking directly to the computer. The teacher explained that the computer was just a go-between between her and a student at another literacy program.

After some more puzzled questions, the student beamed and said "I understand." Far from being embarrassed that she mistook the nature of the electronic interchange, the student told the story on herself to a number of other students and explained to them how telecommunications worked. Thus, this was an empowering experience for the beginning literacy student: she understood how computers facilitated communication between two people and she became a local computer "expert," able to explain aspects of computers to others.

SITE VISIT CONDUCTED: July 1-3, 1991

INTERVIEWEES

Jean-Marc Jean-Baptiste — Executive Director of HMSC
Carol Chandler — Director of ESL program

Elsa Auerbach — Program Coordinator, Bilingual Community Literacy Training project
Eugenie Ballering — Curriculum Development Specialist

Julio Midy — Master teacher
Marilyn St. Hilaire — Kreyol teaching intern
Kerline Auguste — Kreyol teaching intern
Champtal Edmond — Kreyol teaching intern
Romeo Estinvil — former Kreyol teaching intern
Marie Julien — former Kreyol teaching intern

Tom Macdonald — Coordinator of the Study Center
Jeremie Robert — Civics instructor
Noemy Iraheta — ESL teacher

Site Report

Refugee Women's Alliance

3004 S. Alaska
Seattle, WA 98108

Program Director: Judy de Barros

> **"We do a lot of laughing together."**
> - ReWA ESL teacher

> **"ReWA is like a family."**
> - Emanuelle Chi Dang, founding member of SEAWA

Number of Literacy Students

ESL for pre-literate homebound women (23 per quarter)	60 per year
Evenstart Family Literacy (23 per quarter)	50 per year
Advanced ESL (Family Talk Time) (16 per quarter)	45 per year

Key Components

- group-based ESL literacy classes
- on-site child care for mothers attending classes
- easy access for students
- bilingual/bicultural support services, advocacy, and counseling
- mosaic of different funding sources
- multi-ethnic groupings

Special Features

- serves only refugee women
- many of the students not literate in their own language and/or have had little education
- full-time bilingual aides from learners' countries
- partnership with Seattle Central Community College
- innovative use of storytelling and oral history curricula
- combination of classes and support services offers primary prevention to at-risk refugee clients

Funding Sources

- Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Seattle Central Community College
- Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Mental Health Division: Multi-ethnic Family Intervention Grant
- Washington State DSHS, Division of Refugee Assistance
- King County Women's Program
- City of Seattle

Background/Program Context

In the early 1980's, a group of successfully resettled refugee women in Seattle met to discuss the needs in their community. They felt that available job training services were not directed at refugee women and that their needs were not being met. The end result was that, in 1984, a group of Southeast Asian women formed the Southeast Asian Women's Alliance (SEAWA). Their first priority was to establish ESL classes with on-site child care so that homebound refugee women could attend. From the start, SEAWA's mission was to help refugee women achieve economic and personal self-sufficiency in America.

The name was later changed to the Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) to reflect the fact that an increasing number of non-Southeast Asian women were being served, but the mission remained the same. ReWA is one of the first multiethnic Mutual Assistance Associations (MAA) in the state of Washington. The organization, located in a portable building in the Rainier Vista Housing Project, offers ESL literacy classes along with other social services such as counseling/advocacy, on-site child care, and housing assistance.

As with many community-based organizations, ReWA has struggled to provide services to a needy population, often on a shoestring budget. ReWA has responded to funding vagaries for their literacy classes by piecing together funding from diverse sources. The program receives funding from Washington State DSHS Division of Refugee Assistance, Washington State DSHS Mental Health Division, the Washington State Evenstart family literacy program, as well as through various fundraising efforts. The wide range of funding sources means that the program constantly must negotiate among different funding formulas, reporting requirements, and its own program philosophy. Despite changing requirements from funders, ReWA has been able to retain its focus on raising self-esteem and on relating teaching throughout the program to learners' lives as women, refugees, and mothers.

ReWA focuses on reaching and retaining a typically hard-to-reach population, namely, low-income, homebound, refugee women with few literacy skills. In addition, the program enhances its competency-based ESL curriculum with innovative features. For example, the program bases some literacy activities on storytelling and oral history. In addition, the program relates literacy activities to real-life contexts of the refugee families. The program has a strong focus on parenting and family issues as its learners are women with children.

The curriculum and the learning environment are both deeply influenced by the fact that the learners are all refugee women. For many of the women, the classes at ReWA represent the only place where they can discuss their lives and their problems, particularly in adjusting to life in a new country. Regardless of nationality, students attend classes at ReWA for similar reasons: for example, both the Vietnamese and the Ethiopian women need English to survive in the U.S., to enable them to continue their education, to help them keep up with their children, and to get a job. "This is like home to them," according to the bilingual aides: they do not dress up to attend class, they feel comfortable in the classrooms, and the atmosphere is very informal. Moreover, the program's teachers are able to adjust to the special needs of women. Classes are conducted with toddlers crawling around, infants can accompany their mothers to class (cribs are provided in the classroom), and accommodations are made for pregnant women who need to lie down during class.

The fact that ReWA serves only women is important, according to the director, although there are difficulties in being a women's organization in the refugee community. Her opinion is that, if both men and women were in the same class, the women would not share as much about their lives. It would be difficult to discuss certain health-related topics such as family planning or menstrual periods if men were in class. It is difficult for refugee women to speak out. If men were there, they would let the men speak rather than struggle to speak themselves. In sum, the women talk more freely because men are not there, but the absence of men is not so good in terms of reinforcing family ties within the refugee community.[1]

ReWA offers three levels of ESL literacy classes. The first two levels are taught by teachers from Seattle Central Community College with the help of bilingual aides. The third level is taught by ReWA volunteers, staff, and a parenting educator from Seattle Central Community College. The program is currently slightly over-subscribed and has twenty-three learners in each class although they originally only planned for twenty per class. In addition, the program always has a waiting list.

Student Characteristics

The refugee women served by ReWA are mostly mothers with small children. They are all residents of Seattle or King County, and most of them live in the area where the program is located. Roughly eighty percent of the learners receive AFDC, and about two-thirds are single mothers.

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[1] Male volunteers have worked at the program in the past, and some refugee men have worked in the child care center.

In terms of prior education, the women generally have between zero and three years of education in their home countries although the range is substantial: the Mien women from Laos have never been to school while several of the women from the Ukraine have been to college. Some of the women from Ethiopia, for example, know how to read, but they have never learned to write. They cannot form letters, spell words, or construct sentences. The factor that they all have in common is their lack of fluency in English, i.e., almost all the students are entry-level and not ready to attend traditional ESL classes at the local community college.

The students include both new arrivals and some who have lived in the U.S. for awhile; what unites them is their homebound status and isolation. Some of the women (e.g., the Southeast Asians) have had a great deal of orientation to life in the U.S., largely through the camps; others, such as the Ukrainians, have had no orientation at all. In the fall of 1990, sixty percent of ReWA's learners were single heads of household, and most were on welfare. The majority of learners are Southeast Asian (Laotian, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, and Mien) although thirty-five percent are Ethiopian, Eritrean, Ukrainian, and Russian.

Program Design

The educational component of ReWA's program includes three levels of ESL classes, bilingual assistance by trained aides, and on-site care for children of mothers participating in classes. Bilingual/bicultural counseling and advocacy is also provided by the staff of the program. The philosophy of the program is that if the program can give people access to literacy and bicultural/bilingual support, they will be able to achieve self sufficiency.

ESL Literacy Classes

The ESL literacy component is divided into three classes that correspond to different levels of English ability: refugee or pre-literacy, family literacy (Evenstart), and ESL (Family Talk Time). The different classes enable ReWA to accommodate students' time schedules, English abilities, and, to some extent, interests. The content and design for each of the three literacy classes at ReWA is, in part, determined by its funding source. Community speakers and field trips are provided for all the classes.

Refugee or Pre-literacy Class

Students with little or no literacy attend the refugee or pre-literacy class, which has been available for five years. The class is taught by a teacher from Seattle Central Community College with help from ReWA bilingual aides and volunteers. The pre-literacy class, which meets for twelve hours per week, is funded by Washington State DSHS Division of Refugee Assistance. The class emphasizes survival skills through a competency-based pre-employment curriculum which was developed by the State of Washington and Seattle Central Community

College. To be eligible for the class, refugee women must have a Personal Employment Plan (PEP) from one of the Refugee Multi-Service Centers.

Evenstart Class

The next level of class, in terms of English proficiency, is a family literacy class, the Evenstart class (funded by the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction through Seattle Central Community College). This class, which has been offered for three years, focuses on parenting issues and is staffed by a parenting educator and an ESL teacher. Like the instructor for the Refugee class, Evenstart's two teachers are supplied by Seattle Central Community College. To be eligible for the class, women must be non-native speakers of English, read below the 8th grade level, and be mothers of children under the age of seven. The competency-based family literacy curriculum for this class was developed jointly by ReWA and Seattle Central Community College.

The learners in the Evenstart class come to ReWA for a total of twelve hours during four days per week. On Monday and Wednesday, both the ESL teacher and the parenting educator teach; Tuesday is given over to the parenting education, and Thursday is dedicated to ESL. Communicating the content of the parenting education requires the help of the bilingual aides, but the ESL component, which is described as concentrating on language and not translation, does not use them. In general, the theme for the week is worked out by the two teachers and introduced to the class on Monday and Tuesday. The materials generated on Monday and Tuesday (parenting focus) are then used for lessons on Wednesday and Thursday (ESL focus).

Family Talk Time Class

The third class, Family Talk Time, was created for learners who have successfully completed the Evenstart class, but who do not possess enough English language or literacy skills to take beginning ESL at the Community College. (Some of the students simply lacked the child care that would facilitate their attending classes elsewhere.) Funding for this class comes from DSHS Division of Mental Health. The class focuses on community education and parenting via a ReWA-developed curriculum that employs problem-posing and discussion. It was originally taught by the bilingual aides, but now it is taught largely by volunteers, one bilingual aide, a parenting educator from Seattle students and Central Community College, and occasionally, ReWA's director. At the suggestion of the students and bilingual aides, the class is conducted mainly in English. Refugee or immigrant women who are mothers and whose English is at or above the basic level are eligible for the class.

The class meets for eight hours per week. Two volunteer ESL teachers teach the Family Talk Time class on Monday and Tuesday; on Wednesday, a volunteer teams up with one of the bilingual staff, and on Thursday, a parenting educator from Seattle Central Community College teaches the class. Thus, typically the instructors change from day to day, and there are six or more instructors involved in teaching the class. The volunteer coordinator tries to pair a new teacher with one who has taught before.

The volunteers who teach the Family Talk Time class plan the classes and lessons. They originally tried to do this over the telephone, but that did not work because people kept missing each other. The volunteer coordinator suggested that they communicate with one another via a notebook in which they describe on a review sheet what happened in class so that the next day's teacher can read it. This works very well for the volunteers because they can always come in and trace what has happened in the last few classes via the notebook. Lesson plans had been a big concern of the volunteers who taught Family Talk Time, but, in practice, the coordinator felt that they tended to err on the side of over-planning.

Bilingual Aides as Classroom Assistants

Access to bilingual teaching aides from the same countries as those of the majority of the learners constitutes one of the strengths of ReWA's program design. Although the teachers for the Refugee/Pre-literate and Evenstart classes come from the community college, the ReWA bilingual aides actively participate in and assist with both of these classes. The presence of the aides in the classrooms

- exemplifies the respect which the program shows for the learners' own languages and cultures
- compensates for the fact that the program cannot develop an independent curriculum in each language
- offers a way to respond to the multilevel nature of the classes.

Project staff observed the way in which bilingual aides were integrated into the Evenstart class. The bilingual aides joined groups of low-level learners who spoke the same native language as they. The learners had drawn pictures of an event that had happened when they were young girls. Learners then told the others at their table what the picture represented. Other learners were to ask questions to help the author flesh out her story. The bilingual teaching aides contributed to the literacy lesson in a variety of ways. They asked in English and/or in the native language whether the students had understood the story. If not, they explained in the native language. When a learner could not think of any clarification questions to ask the author of a story that her group had just heard, the bilingual aides modeled, in English and/or the native language, some sample questions that could be asked.

In the classroom setting, the bilingual aides have found that they cannot immediately do everything that a teacher says. They are careful to stay on the student's side if a conflict arises, so that the student is not afraid. They use their own judgment either to explain to the teacher what the student objection is or to explain to the student why the teacher said what she did. For example, one teacher asked students to draw a picture of their hometown, but some students objected on the grounds that "we're not children." Thus, part of what the bilingual aides do is to run interference for the students. On the other hand, the bilingual aides also run interference for the teacher by gauging student interest in particular topics such as wedding customs in different countries. In addition, since they speak the languages of the beginning students, they can provide the problem-posing at the end of a story, for example, by asking the students what they think happens next or by helping the learners to relate the story to their own lives.

The bilingual staff are less locked in to the curriculum than the community college teachers. After hearing a discussion of a particular topic, the bilingual aides are able to share with the students what they would do, and they then feel free to ask the learners, "How would this be handled in your country? How should one think about this situation?"

On-site Child Care

One of the innovative features of the literacy program at ReWA is that the on-site child care program is integrated with the literacy program. Not only are the children cared for during class, which enables the mothers to attend, but the daycare rules, snack menus, and other themes related to children become literacy lessons. The child care rooms are adjacent to a classroom, and, if mothers hear their children crying, they are free to go in and take care of them.

The child care facility has two sessions per day and is staffed by a coordinator/teacher, two bilingual teachers, and one volunteer. The facility is not required to be licensed because it serves only the children of women attending classes and only for three hours per day. Through a variety of activities that include arts and crafts projects, stories, free play, climbing (gross motor skills), and playing with puzzles (fine motor skills), the children, many of whom do not speak English, learn socialization skills, some English, and developmental skills.

Bilingual Aides as Counselors

In addition to their work as classroom aides, some of the bilingual aides work as counselors and also do home visits. One of the functions of the counselors is to help students find jobs or enroll in training programs. But ReWA finds that it is very hard to transition people out; child care is a major problem for those who want to work or to go to college full time. There are also problems in interpreting the language requirements of other programs; for instance, two clients referred to a VESL program were told that their "English was too low." The lack of coordination among some of the programs designed to serve the refugee women is frustrating for all concerned.

The advocacy/counseling/case management aspect of the work of the bilingual aides is funded by a State DSHS Multi-Ethnic Family Intervention Project, King County, and the City of Seattle. Women eligible for these services include any refugee women (not just those attending ReWA classes) seeking help with family conflict or abuse, use of community resources, interpretation, or any other form of advocacy to improve their self-sufficiency. These services are provided to both at-risk and in-crisis refugee families. Referrals and requests to ReWA's bilingual counselors come from the Health Department, schools, social workers, the child protection order office, hospitals, and law enforcement.

In their role as counselors, the bilingual aides keep private appointments with students and others referred to them. They perform a number of functions. Sometimes they serve as a sounding board for the refugee women who ask, "What should I learn to get a job?" The bilingual aides must be careful about what advice they give. They try to tell students to make their own decisions, and not to ask the aides what they would do. "We have to be really patient," said one of the aides. Another function of the bilingual counselors is to educate the refugee women about the rights they have in the U.S. For example, the counselors outline services provided by particular agencies. A third function is to provide counseling, referral, and advocacy for casesof family violence. Ideally, the director would like to have access to a licensed person to provide clinical consultation for the bilingual aides.

Instructional Components

> **"There's not a [particular] day to teach [the color] blue."**
> - ReWA family literacy evaluator

Literacy Curriculum

The curriculum for each of the classes at ReWA is interpreted flexibly by the instructors. Rather than providing a step by step outline for what should happen in the classroom, the curriculum details the possible. It is not treated as a schedule for who does what when. Both experimentation and following the interests of the learners is encouraged. Curriculum topics are suggested and set at the beginning of each quarter at a staff meeting with instructors, bilingual staff, volunteers, and the director.

As is true for program design, the focus of the curriculum for each of the three literacy classes at ReWA is, in part, determined by its funding source. For example, the class funded by refugee dollars has a focus on pre-employment skills. However, one of the strengths of the ReWA program is its multi-strand curriculum: students who go through the whole program are exposed to a range of topics and skills. They all learn about survival and pre-employment skills in the pre-literacy class and about parenting children in the U.S. and dealing with the school system in the Evenstart class. Cutting across these competency-based approaches are curricular innovations such as the storytelling curriculum that are simultaneously adopted in each of the classes for a given time interval.

Refugee or Pre-literacy Class

The refugee or pre-literacy class uses the Washington State Refugee Curriculum developed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction's Adult Education Office and Seattle Central Community College. The curriculum is competency-based and job-oriented at the higher levels. The curriculum stresses survival themes, such as handling emergencies, learning basic vocabulary, and learning how the transportation system works.

Learners in the refugee class are first taught to recognize and copy letters. Later, they are taught to read sight words. They play alphabet bingo and other games. They learn how to write their names or practice writing them. Activities may center on a family theme: the learners role-play family members in various contexts, learn the associated words, play games with the words, bring in pictures of a family, label the different family members in the picture, and write a few words or sentences about the family.

Approximately 50% of class is spent on speaking/listening, and 50% on reading/writing. They use LEA stories during the class: the teacher asks questions, writes what students say on the board, then gives the story back to them in typed form with various corrections having been made. The class is flexible in terms of how the state framework emphasizing pre-employment skills is used. One of the goals for the class is to have the learners see themselves in a variety of roles, to give them a sense of the possibilities.

Since the group is always multilevel, the Refugee class works on beginning oral exercises together, but divides into groups according to English proficiency level for reading/writing. The class meets twelve hours a week for a ten-week quarter. About 90% of the students move on to the Evenstart class or Seattle Central Community College after three or four quarters. Learners with high self-esteem and lots of self-confidence are the ones who move on the fastest. The bilingual aides spend a lot of time encouraging the learners in their native language. Building self-confidence and self-esteem is a major part of the Refugee class.

Evenstart Class

The curriculum for the Evenstart class is competency-based and uses parenting issues to teach literacy. The Evenstart curriculum features topics such as health and safety, nutrition, parents as children's first teachers, discipline, child growth and development, community resources, learning and playing, family stories, folk stories, and helping your children in school.[2] There is both a parenting content focus and a literacy/ESL focus in the class. The curriculum has recently been re-worked so that the parenting educator and the ESL teacher spend some time together as a team and some time with students as individual teachers.

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[2] *Integrated Parent Education Literacy* [Evenstart curriculum], (Seattle: Southeast Asian Women's Alliance).

In general, the mothers who attend the Evenstart class have their own needs that are not being met, and, as a result, their motivation for attending class is often not specifically to help their children.[3] The women came to ReWA to learn English, but the program saw a need for childhood education too. Therefore, the two were combined in the Evenstart class. One of the first activities that the class does is to visit the local Head Start program (which occupies the other half of the building that houses ReWA). The purpose is two-fold:

- There they can see other mothers working as teachers, i.e., having a meaningful role outside their own immediate family.
- They can observe how adults can help children to learn.

One goal of Evenstart is to help mothers to relate to their children's learning world. The curricular emphasis in the class is on small steps such as: preparing the refugee mothers for talking to their child's teacher, encouraging learners to go to a parent-teacher conference (preferably both mother and father), talking in class about experiences with the child's teacher and school, learning how to call the school when a child is sick, and learning about safety in the home. The child-related curriculum is complemented by school-related activities. The class goes on field trips related to their children's education. The field trip to a school during class time is often a real eye-opener for them since often the women have never visited a school before (often due to lack of transportation) and do not know what goes on in a classroom. Afterwards, in the literacy class, they might discuss the difference between school in the United States and in their home countries. The teacher may walk the learners through a mock parent-teacher conference. Learners are encouraged to bring to class notes from the school that were sent home with their children so that everyone can learn about them.

Another goal of Evenstart is to provide learners with parenting information. In terms of parenting issues, the class may brainstorm with the parenting educator about important areas related to children and their development. One drawback to the structure of the course, according to the teachers, is that ESL and the parenting curriculum are not completely integrated. The two teachers plan together, but, since one out of four class days is devoted to parenting content, the ESL teacher felt that there was not enough time for ESL. Another frustration, which is common to other ESL programs, is that the class is multilevel, and the ESL teacher feels that she cannot reach all the levels in the way she wants to. However, on the positive side, the combination of content plus ESL is ideal because it does not separate real life from learning English.

Family Talk Time Class

The Family Talk Time class uses a problem-posing and discussion-based curriculum developed at ReWA by the director, bilingual staff, and students. Topics in the curriculum change from term to term. The class is designed for refugee and immigrant parents to increase their English skills and their ability to raise children successfully in America. One goal of the class is to improve communication between non-English speaking parents and the schools and non-English speaking parents and their American born children.

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[3] Rather, as one member of the program staff said, they need time away from their kids although they participate in child care during class breaks.

> Family Talk Time utilizes speakers, field trips, English exercises, vocabulary building, and a curriculum of "problem posing" or family stories. These stories, developed by the students and bilingual staff of the Refugee Women's Alliance present a family situation or problem which is used as a discussion tool in class, allowing the student to discuss a variety of solutions to any one situation as well as to draw comparisons.[4]

Themes include discussing the changing roles of families in America, improving parent-child relations, using community resources, low-cost family entertainment and after school activities for children, interacting with the child's school, increasing self esteem, and fostering pre-employment skills. An interesting development that ReWA has seen is that the learners want direct information on topics like appropriate parent-teacher interactions and family law and that child development jargon, for example, is not interesting to the learners in the class. ReWA has, therefore, developed a parenting curriculum to meet their learners' particular needs; other parenting curricula which they have considered do not seem to meet those needs.

This class works on removing barriers to employment, such as fear, lack of self-esteem, and lack of child care. The class takes field trips to job sites in order to familiarize learners with different jobs. They also work directly on reading want ads, job vocabulary, filling out applications, calling for interviews, and similar employment-related activities.

One class goal is for each parent to attend one parent-teacher conference during the school year. In the class, there is always a lot of talk about women's roles in the U.S. as compared with their own countries. For example, despite talk about rights, some women still think it is shameful to call the police if their husbands beat them. The parenting educator handles this by acknowledging that some American women feel that way too.

The bilingual aides largely developed the Family Talk Time curriculum when they had primary responsibility for teaching the class. At first, they used a number of textbooks, but the books were boring and assumed that the students were native English speakers. So the staff both brainstormed about what the learners needed to know and asked the students what they wanted. In general, the learners wanted to know about a number of practical aspects of living in the U.S. including information about their legal rights, divorce, how to dress for a job interview, how to participate in their children's school, how to open a bank account, and how to write checks.

In practice, grammar tends to flow out of class discussions, and, therefore, the instructors work on grammar points as they arise and do not plan separate grammar lessons. The students in FTT are advanced enough to ask vocabulary and spelling questions and to know present and past tenses. Recently, the program has added more literacy and ESL to the curriculum in response to student comments that they needed more reading and writing.

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[4] Refugee Women's Alliance, Description of Family Talk Time.

Two Innovative Curricula: Storytelling and Oral History

Overlaying the curricula for the three classes are the storytelling and oral history curricula that are used by all the classes simultaneously during particular several-week intervals. Both the storytelling and oral history curricula can be highly successful for a population of adult ESL literacy learners because they build on the strengths of the learners, i.e., what they already know about their own lives and cultures.

Storytelling Curriculum

With minimal funding from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, ReWA developed an ESL storytelling project that combined language, cross-cultural, and family skills development. The storytelling curriculum, used primarily in the Evenstart and Family Talk Time classes at ReWA, focuses on family or folk stories to teach ESL/literacy. The storytelling curriculum had two parts: the collecting and sharing of stories and follow-up ESL activities.

> The goals of this curriculum project were to develop "natural" language skills through storytelling, encourage inter-generational communication, and keep alive tales of a people separated from their native land.[5]

Collecting stories begins with the teacher familiarizing herself with some well-known stories from the learners' native lands. One strategy that ReWA used for introducing learners to the idea of recounting their folk tales was to have them become familiar with several similar published tales. Learners then discussed how the published story would be told in their own culture. To jog learners' memories, the teacher might begin a story and then ask if anyone knew how it ended. Or she might select a theme such as wily animals or tricksters.

Learners can work in small groups or in pairs to detail their stories. Telling and retelling the stories develops rich detail and builds facility with language. Eventually, the story is written down in the learner's own words (some learners prefer to tell the story first in their native language before giving an English version). During the generation of the stories, the teacher finds out from the learners as much as she can about the story: who told it, when it was told, and where it was told. It is the experience of the ReWA staff that the story collecting and sharing aspect of the curriculum should not be short-changed in favor of plunging directly into the follow-up activities, as much rich language activity occurs during the collecting and sharing.

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[5] Judy de Barros, Elisabeth Mitchell, and Cathy Spagnoli, *Storytelling Project*, (Seattle: Southeast Asian Women's Alliance, 1990).

After a number of stories have been collected, one tale is selected for polishing and telling before an audience. Scripts, simple drawing, and other props can be used to help learners remember the story. Repetition of key words and phrases makes for good language practice. Once learners remember the tale clearly, embellishments such as sound effects and gestures can be added. Finally, the storyteller is ready for a live audience.

Collecting stories from beginning pre-literate students, like those in the refugee class, proved to be very difficult because of the learners' lack of oral English to express their stories although visual sketches of the story enhanced the participation of those with little English. Since many learners could better articulate their stories in their native languages, the bilingual aides encouraged them to tell the full story in their native language and then translated what they said into English. Therefore, the level of English in some of the stories was higher than if it had come directly from the students. The resulting stories were often too difficult for the learners themselves to read. Another initially unanticipated problem was the bilingual aides' desire to correct the stories, many of which were important traditional stories from the aides' own countries.

Related ESL activities include "anticipation" (pre-story) cognitive exercises such as having the students guess what will happen next in the story by looking at illustrations or a story strip or by figuring out what a particular gesture might mean when the story is told. After the story has been told, there are basic comprehension checks: who was in the story? what did they do? where did it take place? Was there a dog in the story? Language experience approach works well after the story has been told as a natural extension from the oral to the written:

> The story told by a student is meaningful to that student. Once it is told, the task is to make the most of that meaningful story so that students have a chance to recycle and expand the language and language skills learned from telling the story.
>
> After the story is strong (in terms of being told), have the students who are able to, write the story. If a student is not able to write yet, have her dictate the story to you. It is important for pre-literates to feel at ease using the language they have.[6]

To complete the oral/writing/reading cycle, the students then read the stories they have written. Another follow-up exercise is to draw on the multicultural nature of the class to make cultural comparisons to the story that was told or read: are there any stories similar to this one in your culture?

The storytelling curriculum is adapted to the proficiency levels of the different classes at ReWA. The level of vocabulary and grammar stressed during storytelling and related activities, of course, depends on the English proficiency of the class. There are, however, nearly infinite possibilities ranging from matching picture cards (e.g., husband and wife, pig and dog) to past and present forms of verbs to finding all the words that begin with a particular letter to using some of the vocabulary words in non-story sentences. Students can even write a play or puppet show based on the story. At ReWA, the women made puppets and put on a puppet show for their children using the text of a traditional story that they had developed.

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[6] Judy de Barros, Elisabeth Mitchell, and Cathy Spagnoli, *Storytelling Project*, (Seattle: Southeast Asian Women's Alliance, 1990).

Oral History Curriculum

The storytelling curriculum can also be adapted for oral history rather than for folk tales with similar good results. In fact, the ReWA program director thought that the oral history curriculum had been a particularly good vehicle for literacy both from the teachers' perspective and from that of the learners.

The process for generating literacy materials using the oral history curriculum is very similar to that of the earlier-developed storytelling curriculum: Both depend on telling and re-telling a story and refining it before it is written down. The steps in implementing the oral history curriculum are similar to those for the storytelling curriculum:

1. Staff are trained in how to use the story as data and as a literacy vehicle such as making sentence strips from the story and using it for problem-posing, as well as for a host of other literacy activities.
2. The oral history effort begins with the class engaging in warm-up exercises for telling stories.
3. Teachers teach the appropriate vocabulary for the theme about which the class will gather oral histories (e.g., kitchens or families).
4. Loosening up exercises follow.
5. Learners and teachers discuss ways of remembering stories including guessing how the story might end.
6. Learners then tell their stories to the class.
7. Writing up the stories follows.
8. Finally, the stories become the subject of more literacy activities.[7]

In the higher-level Family Talk Time class, activities might start with the learner drawing several pictures of people she lived with at various times in her life: one of herself with a parent or older relative, one of her eating with her family, one of herself when she was young. One by one, the students describe who is in the first picture and what they are doing. Learners and teacher both ask questions of each learner as she tells her story. Later the learners are asked to write two sentences about their first picture -- the beginning of a story. The enthusiastic teacher commented, "This went really well. *Everyone* had something to say about their picture. Even if people didn't have grandparents, or parents, they still had a story about who they *did* live with."

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[7] Interview with program director.

During the site visit by researchers, the following story was being developed by a learner in the Family Talk Time class:

> It's big leaf. Tree is big too. We took the leaf from the tree, then by rock we needle to the body of the tree. Milk coming from the tree; put it on top of the leaf. Little bit dry to orange color. Then we took it off like this -- tshk -- and then eat like gum. We didn't buy it.[8]

Storytelling and Oral History in ESL Literacy Classes

Both the storytelling and oral history curricula are based on content from learners' lives and reality, yet the two differ in the amount of personal investment in the resultant stories. The oral histories take their subject matter from peoples' lives and can generate high emotion. Because people have lived the stories and have a lot to say, rich literacy materials can result. The traditional stories are much less emotion-laden. There are several advantages to using folk tales or traditional stories rather than personal oral histories:

1. no one learner is on the spot
2. not as many stories will come from the class
3. tales lend themselves a bit more easily to group work

Two factors related to professional expertise and staff development contributed to the success of both the storytelling and the oral history curricula: First, the presence of a professional storyteller or an oral historian inspired both learners and teachers. Without the stimulating presence of the professionals, the resultant stories would have been watered-down versions since the professionals were able to pull a rich level of detail from the learners. The storyteller, for example, worked directly with the learners to facilitate the learners' telling their stories first in their own language and then in English. The program director highly recommends engaging such a professional. She commented that just as "arts in the schools" programs make use of people with particular expertise, language teachers "can't be everything" and should make use of those with relevant special talents such as storytellers or oral historians.

A second important factor in making these two innovative curricula work is that all staff attended the workshop for instructors prior to the collection of stories in the ESL classes and thereby acquired the same vision of how the curriculum should work. The use of the oral history curriculum was preceded by training for the instructional staff by a professional oral historian in how to help learners recount oral histories. The oral historian had taught ESL, and her experience included working with children to train them to do an oral history of their parents' lives. The training consisted of journal writing around the theme of "the kitchen and what it means to you." As part of the training, the facilitator went around the class and asked members to share what they had written. A number of very personal comments on topics such as relationships with their mothers emerged during the training. The staff undergoing the training found the whole experience to be "very touching," which in turn caused them to be enthusiastic about focusing on oral history in their classes. Similar training by a professional storyteller had preceded the use of the storytelling curriculum.

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[8] Kiros Birhane, "Big Leaf," in *Family Stories Project* (Seattle: Refugee Women's Alliance, 1991).

As we have seen above, the Evenstart curriculum covers traditional topics, but these topics are still approached via the learners' own stories when the oral history curriculum is being used, and a number of benefits result.

> First, there is great value in a learner being able to read and write her own words.
>
> Secondly, the classes' valuing stories from the homeland can build the self-esteem of the refugee women by allowing them to show pride in their own cultures and to share these stories with their children.
>
> Third, the refugee women realize the commonalities that exist across cultures and generate support for one another.
>
> Fourth, articulating their own culture and making it known helps prevent the children from looking down on the parents. In Seattle, as in other refugee communities, immigrant parents fear losing the respect of their children.[9]

Throughout the classes, ReWA attempts to increase the learners' self-esteem and language skills by focusing on issues meaningful to learners as women, mothers, wives, and immigrants. By using stories generated by the students, class materials are familiar to learners and relevant to their lives. Further the program reinforces the value it attributes to the learners' work by publishing the stories.

Approaches and Methods

As a refugee program in the state of Washington, ReWA is mandated to use a competency-based curriculum. And indeed, many of the literacy activities at ReWA are designed to fit into broadly-interpreted competencies. For example, one competency area might be to read a schedule. In the Family Talk Time class, students might make a chart that has the names of the children of the students in the class, when they get up, when they go to school, and when they come home. Learning to use these student-generated data and to analyze information from the chart develops the skills needed in reading other kinds of schedules or charts.

Another way in which ReWA relates the curriculum to learners' lives is by having the students brainstorm on relevant topics. For example, students might discuss what they worry about when their kids are at school or what they want from their children. The students, for example, might worry that their children would not like the lunch given to them or might get lost on the way home. A ReWA literacy class would begin a discussion of school with these learners' concerns before moving on to the ins and outs of parent-teacher conferences. For example, an initial discussion revealed that some mothers did not know where their children's schools were, and the program helped them find out. This approach is especially suited to the refugee population since basic information (such as where the school is) can be provided and parental fears can be allayed (such as how the children go home) before parent-teacher issues are addressed. The bilingual aides provide extensive translation help for these discussions in the lower level classes.

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[9] Interview with the two teachers for the Evenstart class, May Pendergrass (parenting educator) and Jane Weiss (ESL teacher).

ReWA's literacy program makes use of as much realia as they can. For example, one of their promising practices is setting up a "store" at the site several times a year. Donated clothing, household goods, and toys are then sorted into categories and given price tags, and fake money is distributed to the students. On the appointed day, learners shop for what they need. In the process, the shoppers discover how to read price tags and how to manage the money they have, and the sellers learn how to make change and how to speak with customers.

Literacy and Parenting Themes Drawn from Learners' Lives

In addition to learning English, the program addresses a number of different areas of interest to the refugee women who attend the ESL literacy classes. In addition to aspects of parenting, themes include families, empowerment, women's rights, domestic violence, community education, and pre-employment readiness with a concentration on breaking down barriers. Domestic violence has been an area in which the refugee women have few resources with which to address the problem. The economic stress and changing roles that accompany refugee status can lead to domestic violence. Overall, the bilingual counselors may get 40-50 domestic conflict referrals a year (not all of them from students at the program). Potential areas for community education are discussed at a staff meeting at the beginning of every quarter. Suggestions for topics have included information on basic hygiene (e.g., washing hands after changing diapers), dealing with obscene phone calls, and family planning. Community educators are brought to the program to speak to learners on these topics.

Multicultural Philosophy

The program has an explicit multicultural philosophy: Politics is to be left at the door in the sense that everybody is considered equal. Students from at least six countries were taking classes at ReWA when project staff visited. Cooperation across nationalities has not always been automatic. In the past, there had been some remarks between members of nationalities that have a history of not getting along: Ethiopians and Eritreans[10], for example, or Cambodians and

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[10] In fact, one problem with unruly children in the daycare class turned out to be a political problem between the Ethiopian and Eritrean mothers.

Vietnamese. But the subject was discussed openly by the director with the students in the classes, and she made clear that all learners were to be respected equally.

The multicultural mix of learners means that the learners have the opportunity to share and compare similar life experiences across cultures. For example, the program's custom of celebrating the spring holidays of different cultures led several Ukrainian students to understand that not all the students were Christian. They had thought everyone in America was Christian. As another example, discussions of wedding customs in various countries engendered interest in all the students.

In general, there is a concern and respect for different cultures that permeates the learning environment at ReWA. The supportive environment enables students to get and give more help to one another than they might in other ESL classes such as those at the community college. Friendships among the learners across ethnic groups are not uncommon at ReWA.

Evenstart Class

Traditional ESL methods are used in the Evenstart class. The ESL aspect of the Evenstart class may begin with a warm-up such as flash cards with pictures of topics like colors, the kitchen, and the bathroom on one side and words printed on the back. In addition, vocabulary sheets with pictures might be passed out to the class. Typically, the teacher would pair high-level and low-level students.

The Evenstart class also uses some problem-posing and discussion in the parenting component. For example, a situation between parent and child might be posed, such as concerns about what a child is learning in school. Various learners would be asked how they would deal with the situation now and how they would have dealt with it back in their own country. Various related cross-cultural aspects of child-rearing would be discussed. The parenting educator commented that she tries to emphasize that the women are good mothers who are consciously trying to improve their children's well-being. In both the Evenstart and Family Talk Time classes, the approach of the parenting educators is low-key, holistic, and focused on the entire family, not just the adults or the kids' schooling.

Evenstart Class: Classroom Observation

A typical lesson mixing ESL and parenting had students placing pictures of people showing emotions under the correct word such as silly, happy, sad, angry, etc. Students talked to one another or aides in their native languages. As another activity, the students wrote stories about when they were small and happy and drew pictures. The class was divided into groups of four or five, with the learners who speak one language all sitting together. Each person told her story to the group. Questions from fellow learners and resulting answers from the author would later be used to lengthen and embellish the story. Eventually, after the story had been talked through a number of times, an aide or teacher would write it down. The student would then read her story into a tape recorder and, later, read it aloud to the class.

Cross-cultural cooperative learning went on in this classroom that is both multilevel and multiethnic. For example, higher-level students (from Viet Nam) were deliberately placed by the teachers with lower-level students who spoke a different language (students from Eritrea). At one table, this grouping forced a Vietnamese woman to communicate in English with the aide who was assisting the latter group. The language pattern observed was that the Eritrean learners spoke in their native language to the Eritrean aide who in turn translated what they had said into English. Despite the cumbersome translation process, an animated discussion of weaving, spinning, and making thread ensued after the learners heard a student story about making clothes. At another table, a Vietnamese learner who spoke English quite well assisted an Ethiopian learner (in English) in formulating her questions for a fellow learner who had just described a picture she had drawn.

Family Talk Time

Typical activities in Family Talk Time include pairing students and having them ask questions of each other, reading their own stories aloud, and matching up words from a student's story with a similar word (e.g., lake & water, tease & bother). Another activity might begin with copying a story from the board (perhaps one related to the teacher's family). The next step might be to circle all the verbs, to circle words you don't know, or to finish the story. Another approach to literacy is to have the students draw a picture which they will then use to tell a story or to use a picture drawn by the teacher to generate a story.

Family Talk Time: Classroom Observation

On the day we visited, there was a focus on pronunciation and reading during the first half of class and on writing during the second half. Class began with reading a story that one of the two instructors had written about the relationship between her mother and her grandmother, who had grown up in Viet Nam and moved to France. First, the story was read aloud by the instructor, then each learner read one sentence. Problem-posing questions such as "why didn't the mother and grandmother get along?" were intermixed with vocabulary questions such as "what do we mean by get along?" The word "secret" had been used in the story and this led to the women describing the meaning of the word; the teacher wrote their suggestions on the board. Later, students divided into pairs and asked each other questions about pictures they had previously drawn of themselves and someone much older. Each pair generated a story in this way. The teacher selected one story to read aloud and said that she would type this one the next day's class with a different teacher.

Learner Assessment

Intake and Initial Assessment

When a woman first comes to ReWA, a bilingual aide/counselor finds out the languages the prospective learner speaks. Then the learner is referred to an appropriate bilingual counselor who explains to her what services are available, including the ESL classes.

The learner (or the aide if the learner can't write) fills out a first contact form that records how many children the woman has, how the woman heard about ReWA, and what her alien registration number is. If the woman is on welfare, a Personal Employment Plan (PEP) is required. The counselor then asks what she needs help with. The use of the native language at this stage allows a certain amount of trust to be established between the learner and the counselor.

During the process, the bilingual counselor asks about the goals and concerns of the prospective learner. Ninety percent of the women who come to ReWA do not know English, and the goals of these new learners are characterized by the program as wanting to learn English in order to learn about "the system":

- they want to fit in to a new society.
- they want to know how to take a bus, to shop for groceries, to understand the school system.
- they want to learn enough English to get jobs.

If the woman expresses interest in learning English, the counselor briefly assesses her skills to get some idea of her educational background and to determine if any of ReWA's three levels might be appropriate for her (students who appear to know enough English to go into the Evenstart or Family Talk Time classes are retested by an ESL specialist using the BEST test).

Later, the director assesses her literacy skills using parts of the Washington State Refugee Test, an employment-related test that is used for placement at ReWA. Learners are asked to do activities such as writing their names, recognizing letters and numbers, and sight reading words.[11] A woman who could not complete these tasks, or who could complete them but not read a simple sentence, would be placed in the Refugee class. If the woman could complete the above tasks and read a simple sentence, she would be placed in the Evenstart class. Once a person has been tested, the program determines if there is a place available in the appropriate class. If not, the learner waits until there is space in the class.

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[11] From ReWA's experience, it appears that many refugees from Southeast Asia get a good deal of orientation before coming to the U.S., refugees from Africa get only a little orientation, and Soviet refugees get no orientation. Almost all the Southeast Asian women can write their names and have familiarity with numbers and the alphabet. If they did not learn this in their home countries, they generally learned in the refugee camps.

Learner Assessment

For the learners in the Evenstart class, both language and parenting skills are assessed at the beginning and end of the year. Learners are given the BEST test as a pre-test at the beginning of the year and as a post-test in June to assess progress in learning English. In addition to assessing language skills, the program also does pre- and post- ratings of a number of aspects of parenting (e.g., awareness/understanding of the home as a learning environment, participation with the child in activities in the home and outside the home, knowledge of child growth and development). These parenting skills are assessed via a questionnaire that is filled out by both the mother and the parenting educator jointly. A third component of the evaluation is not a progress evaluation of the student but rather an evaluation of the class by the student: an interviewer asks each student both open-ended questions (e.g., "What did you like most in the Evenstart classes?") and questions designed to elicit ratings of not much, a little, or a lot (e.g., "In the Even Start classes I have learned new skills to help me teach my children").The director plans to pre- and post-test with the BEST test the learners in the Family Talk Time class in the same way as the Evenstart class.

Program Effectiveness

When asked how they knew that their program was effective, the program staff pointed to small changes as illustrating literacy progress:

- On their own, several women got library cards after being in the program for awhile.
- Another woman went to the library and checked out tapes.
- One learner took another to a parent-teacher conference for the first time.

Perhaps one of the nicest outcomes is the development and nurturing of cross-cultural friendships: for example, a Cambodian woman who had attended classes quite regularly stopped coming. An Ethiopian student who lived near her went to visit her to see if there was a problem and discovered that the woman's child was seriously ill. The Ethiopian woman befriended the largely homebound Cambodian woman and helped her get through the ordeal.

Other Program Components

Community Needs Assessment

Like other programs with intimate ties to the community it serves, ReWA has not done a formal needs assessment. Board members as well as bicultural staff members are active in their individual ethnic communities and thus keep the program aware of community needs, trends, and services. Staff members regularly attend Refugee Forum and Refugee Planning meetings.

Staffing

The ReWA staff consists of a director, a financial manager, a volunteer coordinator, child care workers, and a number of bilingual aides, some of whom also work as counselors. Seattle Central Community College provides instructors for classes in ESL and parenting education. In addition, there are a number of volunteers who teach and tutor at the program.

Director

The director has a degree in education with additional coursework in training and management. Her previous experience includes writing a curriculum and developing training for ESL volunteers, chairing the King County Refugee Forum, teaching ESL in Spanish, teaching ESL and workplace literacy, and training both bilingual assistants at a community college and teachers in how to work with bilingual assistants. At a small program like ReWA, the director initially must wear many hats: she must manage the literacy classes and the daycare program, meet with the instructional staff and the counselors, choose speakers from the community, work with the community college, and maintain the waiting list.[12]

Bilingual Aides/Counselors

All aides/counselors are bilingual in English and one of the native languages of the learners, and most come from the refugee community. The languages spoken by five of the aides at the program in May 1991 include: Vietnamese, Lao, Thai, Cambodian, Amharic (Ethiopia), Tigrina (Eritrea), Russian, Ukrainian, and Latvian.

The bilingual aides are more than translators in the classes; they see themselves as bridges between cultures. Since they must negotiate between cultures, they need to be mature enough to understand their role and to strike a balance between loyalty to the students and representing the program. For this reason, the bilingual aides are not teenagers.

The bilingual aides can provide a level of support to the refugee women that those from a different culture simply cannot do. For example, an Asian woman might refuse to go to a job interview on a certain day because it is a bad day according to the lunar calendar. The aide may or may not agree with the job-seeker, but she would at least understand why that makes sense to her. For someone grappling with living in a new culture, such empathy can become very important.

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[12] Also, she works with the Board, represents the agency in the community, meets with funders, writes grant proposals, develops budgets, and supervises staff.

ESL Teachers and Parenting Educators

The teachers for two of the three ReWA literacy classes are provided by Seattle Central Community College. This means that the teachers are not actually part of the program staff, but rather they are assigned to ReWA as teachers. From a management perspective, it can sometimes be "awkward" that the program does not hire the teachers directly. At one point, Seattle Central Community College sent different teachers each quarter for the ReWA classes, but a more satisfactory arrangement for all concerned is the current one of having the same teacher for a whole year. In general, the management team at Seattle Central Community College and the ReWA director get along well, and it is certainly true that the community college provides ReWA with credentialed teachers that it would otherwise have difficulty affording.

One of the Evenstart teachers expressed the opinion that the key to making Evenstart work was to know the population it serves. In particular, she felt that teachers should be familiar with learners' cultures and how they differ from that of the U.S. In keeping with this theme of learning others' cultures, the parenting educator visited the homes of some of the learners. One purpose was to build self-esteem of the students by having the teacher come to their home where they could show the pictures of their families. If the teacher were to observe parenting practices stemming from another culture that might be considered inappropriate in the U.S., such issues might be explored in class.

The teachers feel that they can try new things at ReWA, that they have greater freedom at ReWA than at the more traditional community college. Teaching at ReWA may call on more of a teacher's resources, but teachers develop new strengths as a result. The relationship between Seattle Central Community College and ReWA exemplifies one way for community colleges and universities can sponsor education directly in the community. In fact, teaching at ReWA is considered part of the community college's "minority outreach."

Child Care Workers

Some of the child care workers are former program students, and others are students from Seattle Central Community College specializing in early childhood education.

Volunteers

ReWA has a volunteer coordinator who is a graduate student in the geography department at the University of Washington with a particular interest in refugees and economic development. She is paid for quarter time although she often spends twice or three times that amount of time at ReWA. Since she can't attend all the classes, she calls all the volunteers weekly or every other week to see how their teaching is going. In recruiting volunteers, the coordinator looks for people with previous experience in ESL, education, or volunteering; interest in multicultural issues; and travel experience. Most of the volunteers come to ReWA through self-referral and concern about international or women's issues and a desire to gain ESL teaching skills.

ReWA also is able to make use of eight volunteers of whom the majority are not bilingual. Many of them are young college graduate women who are interested in helping other women. Classroom volunteers, who are asked to commit their time to ReWA for at least one quarter, have two principal roles at the program: As discussed earlier, volunteers are largely in charge of the Family Talk Time class. Other volunteers assist in the Evenstart and Pre-literate classes. In the Even Start classes, two volunteers work two days per week with groups of four or five learners on exercises that the teachers have planned, and similarly the refugee pre-literate class has volunteers who sit among the learners to offer help for two days per week.

ReWA occasionally has more volunteers than they can accommodate. In the near future, volunteers will play a role in some new offerings at ReWA: one-to-one tutoring; a citizenship class in the evening (for both men and women) for which ReWA will write their own curriculum focusing on city, county, and state; and a class requested by students on driving skills taught by a male volunteer.

Board of Directors

Seventy-five percent of ReWA's fifteen-member Board of Directors are refugee and immigrant women. The board of directors and the program staff have a cooperative relationship. The board participates with the program staff and some of the Seattle Central Community College teachers and volunteers in the annual staff retreat. During this planning session, priorities are set for the coming year. On the other side, ReWA staff members not only attend board meetings during the year but also contribute to their agenda.

Staff Development

ReWA staff participate in programmatic decision-making at the beginning of every quarter and have access to special training monthly. At the beginning of each quarter, the entire staff convenes to set the topics for that quarter and to discuss the previous quarter: what went well, what went wrong, what changes should be made. ReWA also has monthly staff development meetings open to all program staff including the community college teachers and the volunteers. Sometimes the staff development is quite specific as when a professional storyteller and an oral historian provided training for the instructional staff before the program introduced those literacy curricula. In addition to such specific training, the bilingual staff and volunteers attend workshops on relevant techniques such as problem-posing, mental health, first aid, etc.

The ReWA director coordinates staff development with the community college for the Evenstart class. ReWA provides training for teachers in how to use bilingual aides successfully in their classrooms. Tips include developing a realistic appraisal of the skills of the aides and using their strengths. It is suggested that teachers plan differently for days that they will have aides and that small group or one-to-one work be planned. Teachers are encouraged to observe the aides' work with learners and how learners respond but to let the aides work independently. Clear instructions to the aides about how much translation they should do and about their role in that day's activities are ways to facilitate a good working relationship.

The three teachers from Seattle Central Community College, who are not technically part of the ReWA staff, are invited to participate in ReWA monthly and quarterly staff meetings, but participating in ReWA meetings and training is voluntary on their part. The teachers usually attend special ReWA staff development activities such as the workshops on storytelling and oral history but not other training. As community college staff members, the teachers have access to other staff development activities that are independent of the ReWA program. For example, an ESL teacher from ReWA's Evenstart class might attend a family literacy workshop at ReWA, but she might consider that her primary professional development comes through conferences in the ESL field. Similarly, the parenting educator for Evenstart might attend outside conferences on child abuse and other topics in her field not connected with ReWA.

Volunteers and bilingual aides are trained by the Volunteer Training Project through Tacoma Community House. This twelve hours of free training is geared specifically to teaching ESL to refugees, is offered every month, and serves as an introduction to the refugee experience. People who have taught at ReWA give workshops for the volunteers on topics such as problem-posing. In addition, the volunteers participate in other training offered at ReWA such as that for the oral history and storytelling curricula. Volunteers also attend local ESL conferences when possible.

All bilingual staff attend interpreter training given by the Red Cross and meet regularly to discuss cultural issues in the program. More specialized training is available for bilingual counselors/advocates. ReWA sponsors bi-weekly talks on mental health issues and requires counseling staff to attend. Other staff are also encouraged to go. A counselor from the Asian Counseling and Referral Center, is available for the initial training of the bilingual counselors. He goes over with them the difference between concepts of mental health in Southeast Asia and in the U.S., works on communication skills with them, and teaches them how to talk to social workers. These aides also receive social work/counseling training on special topics from other community-based agencies and government offices.

The bilingual counselors also receive training in how to do a home visit from one of the ReWA parenting educators from Seattle Central Community College. She teaches them to assess how things look in a home and to talk to each child alone. Usually, a team of two bilingual counselors or one bilingual counselor and a senior staff member will visit a home.

Community Outreach

ReWA is an active participant in the refugee provider community and belongs to a number of refugee organizations such as the King County Refugee Forum, the King County Refugee Planning Committee, and the King County Refugee Square Table. They also network with the larger social service community such as the King County Human Services Coalition, the Coalition against Domestic Violence, the Literacy Coalition, the Seattle Public School Bilingual Coalition, and the State Mental Health Minority Concerns Committee.

ReWA informs other social service providers about its program through fliers and announcements at meetings. They have an established mutual referral system with welfare, health clinics, schools, Head Start providers, the courts, and other refugee service providers.

ReWA learners often find out about the program through referrals from the above organizations, as well as through personal referrals from current and former students and board members. Many women learned of and enrolled in ReWA's educational component after coming to the agency for counseling services. ReWA is well known, and it does not do any other recruiting of potential students since the classes are usually filled, and there are women on the waiting lists.

Support Services

As we have seen, in addition to literacy classes, ReWA provides many services including social services, counseling, advocacy, and child care.

Child care for pre-school age children is an integral part of ReWA's literacy program; it is the only literacy program in the city that offers free on-site child care, which is seen as a vital link in allowing the women to attend the program. Most women would not be able to attend classes unless child care were offered. Children are cared for in a room next to a classroom so mothers can leave to attend to their children if necessary. Several of the child care providers are bilingual and bicultural.

ReWA reinforces the literacy emphasis of their ESL classes by maintaining a lending library of children's books that learners can check out and take home. As in other aspects of the program, cross-cultural stories and stories from the learners' own countries are featured.

Beyond child care and English literacy classes, women typically receive assistance with housing, welfare, health care needs, school registration and communication, and referral. Counselors also provide assistance in the form of emotional support, interpretation, advocacy, and referral to families experiencing conflict or domestic violence.

Summing up

ReWA's program philosophy emphasizes the cultural and economic realities of the learners, but the program encounters several challenges in this area.

1. As do many community-based organizations, ReWA has struggled with providing services to a needy population on a shoestring budget. The constant need to fundraise can detract from energies that could go into serving learners.

2. Furthermore, because of its diverse funding sources, it constantly must negotiate between different funding requirements and its own program philosophy.

3. Managing the growth of the program in terms of an increasing number of classes, staff, and students has challenged the program's resources.

4. Because ReWA does not hire or train the teachers from the community college, they do not have direct control over how the classes are taught. Also, ReWA emphasizes the learners' cultural and economic realities, yet, because teachers are not paid to attend staff development at ReWA, they may not be as aware of these issues as other program staff.

One of the program's strengths is its resourcefulness:

- The director has chosen to employ professionals who can make a unique contribution to the program: parenting educators, a professional storyteller and an oral historian, content people as speakers, people from the women's program at Seattle Central Community College, and a consultant to do board development.

- For the bilingual aides, the program makes use of a range of different training available in the community.

- ReWA's partnership with Seattle Central Community College has an up and a down to it. The up side is that the program has access to certificated teachers from the college at essentially no cost. The college can retain slots and fulfill their mandate for minority outreach by sending teachers to ReWA. The down side is that the program director has little control, other than informal discussions which often work pretty well, over what the teachers teach or how they teach it.

- Providing bilingual assistance in classes plus bilingual counseling generates for the aides paid full-time and part-time slots, complete with benefits.

SITE VISIT CONDUCTED: May 14 - 16, 1991

INTERVIEWEES

Judy de Barros, Program Director
Sue Wilkes, volunteer coordinator
Jane Weiss, ESL teacher (Evenstart class)
May Pendergrass, parenting educator (Evenstart class)
Diana Cales, ESL teacher (Refugee/Pre-literacy class)
Charlotte Jahn, parenting educator (Family Talk Time class)
Maralyn Thomas-Schier, parenting education evaluator (Evenstart class)
Emanuelle Chi Dang, found member of the SouthEast Asian Women's Alliance (SEAWA)
Kim Vandyvong, bilingual aide/counselor (Laos)
Beruke Giday, bilingual aide/counselor (Ethiopia)
Sonya Lutkasaya, bilingual aide/counselor (Soviet Union)
Jennifer Huong, bilingual aide/counselor (Cambodia)
Lynn Spencer, Family Talk Time volunteer teacher
Jeanne Sewell, Family Talk Time volunteer teacher

Site Report

Literacy Education Action
El Paso Community College

P.O. Box 20500
El Paso, TX 79998

Program Director: Carol Clymer-Spradling

> **My students are unique individuals. They have had many rich life experiences. They have knowledge and understanding of many things. They are intelligent and capable.**
>
> **Education means more than memorizing letter sounds and vocabulary lists. Literacy is a means for my students to reach personal goals and influence change in our community.**
>
> — from the "Tutor Creed" in LEA's tutor handbook[1]

> **"Pounding phonics into people goes against our sensibilities at this point."**
>
> — Literacy Education Action coordinator

Number of Literacy Students

Literacy Education Action, small group instruction	200

Key Components

- a number of different literacy strands for people who read at the sixth grade level or below in Spanish or English
    - small group instruction
    - workplace literacy
    - tele-LEA
    - literacy for welfare recipients (Project FORWARD)
    - one-to-one tutoring program using trained volunteers
- five step model of instruction adapted for each literacy strand
- flexibility in assigning students to appropriate literacy classes
- bilingual approach
- whole language approach

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[1] Kay Taggart, *Tutor Handbook*, El Paso: El Paso Community College, Literacy Education Action, 1991.

Special Features

- Literacy Education Action small group instruction program
    - community-based educators
    - Spanish literacy for those who can't read and/or write in their native language
    - emphasis on cognitive skills
    - student flow procedure from orientation to preparation for community college ESL, vocational, or developmental education classes
    - Freirean-influenced problem-posing curriculum
    - lessons based on student interests
    - open entry/open exit

Funding Sources for Literacy-related Activities

- federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act funding for small group instruction
- federal Adult Education National Workplace Literacy program funding for workplace literacy
- separate funding for other literacy strands

Background/Program Context

The El Paso Community College, which has three campuses, is located in El Paso, Texas, at the very western edge of the state. El Paso is a city of about 600,000 people in which about 70% of the population is of Hispanic origin. Literacy Education Action (LEA) is the umbrella program for the community college's literacy efforts, and its Literacy Center is located at the Rio Grande campus, which is the largest of the three campuses. All of the community college's literacy programs are coordinated from the LEA Literacy Center. LEA has provided leadership for other literacy groups in the community including networking with the El Paso Literacy Coalition and the El Paso public libraries.

Literacy Education Action programs are offered throughout the city. The community college's literacy efforts began with a tutoring program in 1985 and 1986. LEA initially recruited and trained volunteer tutors and recruited as learners community members with reading skills below the sixth grade level. This initial literacy offering was augmented over time by a small group instruction component, a family literacy program, a workplace literacy program, and, most recently, a literacy program for AFDC recipients.

Site Visit

The project's time constraints imposed a limit on the amount of time that we could spend at the site. Researchers concentrated primarily on the **small group instruction program** (2 days) and secondarily on the **workplace literacy component** (1/2 day) when they made a site visit to El Paso Community College.

Program Design Used by Literacy Education Action

The philosophy of whole language and using language in context permeates all of the LEA literacy classes. Teaching skills in isolation such as grammar drills or memorizing word lists is not a part of the program's repertoire. Instead, their literacy classes draw on the adults' background knowledge, experiences, and facility with at least one spoken language. These strengths are reinforced through a curriculum that emphasizes cognitive skills and learning strategies by examining current community issues, encouraging critical thinking and the expression of personal opinion, and promoting action. The net result of this strategy is to increase the awareness of the learners of the social context in which they all live and to heighten the confidence of the learners in their ability to analyze issues and come to their own conclusions. The program's goal is for their students to become independent learners.

The goal of biliteracy is very much a part of all of the college's ESL literacy offerings: the use of Spanish is encouraged whenever it makes the meaning more clear. At the beginning ESL level, students frequently mix Spanish and English in the same sentence both orally and in writing. Learning facilitators in the ESL literacy classes speak English as much as possible, but they may use a few key words in Spanish to help students understand. That is, both students and facilitators engage in "code switching" in order to make their meaning clear. Explanations in Spanish help to bridge the two languages, and drawing students' attention to cognate comparisons increases their language awareness (tranquila and tranquil, "NyQuil makes you tranquil"). The program seeks the concurrent development of English and Spanish literacy skills for their adult learners.

As indicated above, the Literacy Education Action Center runs a number of literacy programs connected to the community college. The common thread that ties these programs together is the Five Step Model developed by Elizabeth Quintero initially for an inter-generational literacy program and now used and adapted as appropriate by all of the LEA literacy programs. This versatile curriculum framework is based on language acquisition and uses generative themes and is, therefore, in some sense Freirean.

Description of the Five Step Model

This five step model[2], used in all of the literacy programs sponsored by the Literacy Education Action Center, is adapted to each program according to the needs and goals of the learners:

Step One: **Initial Inquiry** — introduces theme, gets mental set going, generates correct language input

goal: "to promote students' verbal opinion expression regarding relevant issues impacting their lives and to develop an English language vocabulary germane to these issues"

topic often based on current critical issues; may be introduced with a picture, a video, a song, etc. ("a code") designed to stimulate students' prior knowledge; teacher asks questions to connect code to students' lives and community issues; teacher facilitates oral discussion based on learners' opinions and thoughts; learners speak in Spanish (their native language) or in English; teacher paraphrases key comments in English and writes key words and phrases from the discussion on the board in English; teacher reads words from board aloud, learners read chorally, then learners copy words

Step Two: **Learning Activity** — gives students information about the theme

goal: "to promote student competence and confidence in interacting with English language"

interact with printed matter relevant to the topic; may focus on vocabulary, involve teamwork, use environmental print; may also be a hands-on activity such as role-playing what goes on in a doctor's office: the patient fills out forms, the doctor or nurse uses a stethoscope, a glucose monitor, or a blood pressure gauge; class discusses the sort of questions that they might ask a doctor about these measurements

Step Three: **Language Experience/Writing Opportunities** — emphasizes meaningful communication in writing

goal: "to promote student competence and confidence in writing English language"

teacher emphasizes innovative forms of writing: write a bumper sticker, letter to the editor, slogan, or recipe on the topic at hand; for example, one woman wrote a recipe for keeping children away from gangs: "Take 1/4 cup of love, add 1/2 cup of respect, etc."

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[2] Summarized from Kay Taggart, *Using the Five-Step Model with Adult ESL Literacy Students*, El Paso: El Paso Community College, Literacy Education Action, n.d.

other examples of strategies: teacher models type of writing; each student contributes to group writing on board; student can dictate to teacher (depending on the class, student may use Spanish and teacher may write simple English); independent writing with teacher as a resource for spelling and translating Spanish expressions into English; edit writing as a class on the board or one-to-one; solicit student input on editing with questions such as "how do we start a paragraph? can you think of another way to say this?"; discussion of usage, punctuation, and spelling emerges from editing process.

Step Four: **Reading in Context** — students read materials related to theme in class

goal: "to promote student competence and confidence in reading English language"

in-class reading of newspapers, stories, poetry, and other students' writings; repetition used to build fluency through repeated exposure to text; methods include echo reading, choral reading, round robin reading, reading storybooks aloud, and eventually silent reading; stress affective, not factual, comprehension questions "how do you think he felt?" not "where did he go?"

Step Five: **Home assignment** — students explore topic in various ways outside of class

goal: "to promote student incorporation of English language skills into their home environment"

write in journal, work on personal dictionary, find newspaper article related to topic, interview family members about thoughts and opinions related to the class topic, complete worksheet.

The five-step model fits in well with the program's emphasis on cognitive skills for it involves a whole range of mental activities: brainstorming, questioning, organizing, presenting, revising, and editing.

Case One: Small Group Instruction Program

This program got started in 1985 as a volunteer, drop-in tutoring program. For a short time, it followed the Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) model. It became too expensive to run as a drop-in, individualized program, so the small group LEA program was started in 1988.

The small group program is held on the three community college campuses, and evening hours are available in addition to daytime. This program is funded through the federal Perkins Act, which stipulates that the literacy program must be geared toward students with vocational goals. Classes meet twice a week for two hours each day.

Student Characteristics

Approximately 70 percent of the students served at El Paso Community College campuses are Hispanic, reflecting the same proportion as in the city's population. Students must be legal residents in order to be served under the Perkins Act.

The typical learner at El Paso Community College's literacy programs is a native Spanish speaker who is not literate in her/his own language and is now trying to learn English. Many of the literacy students were born in Mexico, and a significant number have had only 0 - 2 years of schooling in Mexico (and don't know the alphabet). Oral fluency in English varies considerably among the literacy students: some speak English every day because they are married to American native English speakers, while others have few occasions to speak, let alone read and write, English. Access to better jobs is the prime reason that students give for wanting to learn English.

Program Design for the Small Group Instruction Program

An explicit student flow procedure is used for students who want to enroll in the small group literacy classes.[3] They participate in a three-stage instructional model that uses the team approach: Exploration Team, Instruction Team, and Advancement Team. Entry into classes is preceded by an intake interview (Welcoming Team), and, if the LEA literacy classes are deemed appropriate, a month-long introductory orientation class (Exploration Team). The small group literacy classes (Instruction Team) are divided into Spanish literacy classes and bilingual ESL literacy classes. For those who successfully complete the ESL literacy classes, an advanced class (Advancement Team) follows to ease the transition from literacy classes to ESL or vocational programs. The literacy classes meet for three 14-week sessions per year.

Welcoming Team (Intake)

A member of the Welcoming Team greets prospective learners and tries to make them feel at ease. During this initial low-key visit, the program does a quick assessment by asking potential students to fill out a form requesting basic demographic information in English. If they do not read English, the questions are translated into Spanish. Potential learners complete as much of the form as they can. They also provide a short writing sample in the form of a paragraph in either English or Spanish about their educational goals. If the student cannot write, the interviewer asks the questions of the student and writes down the answers verbatim. In addition to finding out the students' English language proficiency level, the intake interviewer tries to understand their goals (ESL, vocational, etc.), determine their prior educational experience, and assess their literacy level. This information will help determine to which program they will be referred.

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[3] See Kay Taggart, *Student Matriculation Procedure*, El Paso: El Paso Community College, Literacy Education Action, n.d.

Certain potential students are automatically referred to other programs at the college or in the community. For example, a student who wants to learn English but who already reads Spanish at the high school level would be referred to the ESL credit program — which is the largest credit producing program at the college with over 3,000 students enrolled. Others who wish to learn to speak English but not necessarily to read and write English are referred to programs such as the English Speaking Center, a volunteer program at one of the local churches.

Students whose skills and prior education seem appropriate for one of the LEA literacy programs move on to an Exploration class, which is the second step of the intake and placement process.

Exploration Team (orientation process)

The Exploration class, which meets for twenty-four hours for one month (three hours twice a week), is a combination assessment and orientation class taught by the literacy facilitators on a rotation basis. In this class, the focus is on the role of literacy in everyday life. The facilitator assesses students' strategies, interests, wants, and needs in terms of reading, writing, and career goals. In turn, students are made aware that LEA's approach is not that of a traditional program — there are no textbooks and the teacher does not know everything.

Exploration classes, which typically have only 5-6 students, are generally offered three times a day, with a new one starting every other week. Therefore, most students who contact the program need wait no longer than two weeks before beginning a class.

The role of the facilitator is to guide students through activities, such as writing a biographical sketch, scanning the newspaper for various features, and developing a personal inventory of reading and writing practices, in order for the learners to explore their own goals and for the facilitator to assess where they should be placed. In this initial stage, discussion may take place in English, Spanish, or both, depending on the group. In fact, facilitators monitor the participants' oral language as one factor affecting placement. A portfolio of the learner's reading and writing samples, to which is added other pertinent information such as the facilitator's comments, is compiled to guide placement in appropriate classes. This same portfolio is augmented during subsequent literacy classes and forms a comprehensive record of student progress.

At the end of the month-long course, student placement or referral is "negotiated" based on students' expressed goals and observed needs. Team leaders from each class meet every other week to determine where to place each student. Students may be placed in one of the small group classes, the tele-LEA program, the Project Forward program (JOBS/AFDC), the individual tutor program, or the Advancement component. Except at the beginning of the session, students join classes that have already been meeting for some time.

Instruction Team (literacy classes)

Students meet with a facilitator in groups of four to ten for six hours per week. As outlined above, during class students explore generative themes that relate to their own lives via a non-traditional problem posing curriculum. Discussion, reading, and writing are the vehicles for literacy development. Specific skill development occurs through participatory activity and is assessed via portfolios of the students' work. Both Spanish literacy and bilingual classes are offered.

Spanish literacy

The initial purpose of the two levels of Spanish literacy classes is to prepare learners to study English literacy. Students in the class are typically native Spanish speakers who have not learned to read and write in their own language. Teaching Spanish literacy poses a bit of a "dilemma" for the program — there are no clear guidelines for when a student should move on to ESL literacy (bilingual class) or to an ESL credit program. Students generally stay in the Spanish literacy classes until they are ready for the bilingual Level II class although sometimes they move to the Level I class.

Bilingual ESL classes

The small group program transitions the students from Spanish to English in two ways:

- first, the program uses dual language instruction within classes, i.e., both Spanish and English are used for instruction as appropriate for a particular group of learners. Code-switching by both teaching staff and learners is encouraged.

- second, across classes, students move from Spanish literacy classes where instruction is in Spanish to bilingual ESL classes in which the amount of instruction in English increases as they progress from Level I to Level III and beyond.

The emphasis is always on helping students to keep the language and literacy they have and to build on it — to smooth the transition from Spanish to English. For example, one facilitator approaches her bilingual class in the following way: she writes an LEA story on the board in

Spanish, gets the meaning in English (as opposed to a literal translation) from the class, then writes it in English. The goal is to get the students to feel confident enough in English so that they won't have to double-check in Spanish.

A lesson in a bilingual class might begin with a model car being handed around among the students. This might lead to a discussion (in English and Spanish) of the positive and negative aspects of owning a car. The discussion might then turn to the pollution that cars cause and what can be done about it. Key words and phrases would be written on the board in English, and the learners would read them aloud and copy them at the end of class. These same words would then be used in a writing assignment.

Advancement Team (orientation to higher level programs)

Students are referred to the advancement class, which also meets for six hours per week, by their facilitator. The purpose of the advancement class is to smooth the transition for students who have made enough progress to move on to other programs such as the regular ESL classes at the college, vocational training, or GED or other ABE classes. The class focuses on study skills, test-taking strategies, registration for classes, how to apply for financial aid, and the admissions process. At the end of the class, the learner is familiar with the steps necessary to get admitted to the community college's classes including taking an "ability to benefit" test for qualifying for financial aid at the community college. The goal of the class is to demystify the educational system for the literacy students, and, as part of this, the students tour the career center at the college and are introduced to the books used in the community college ESL classes. Students are monitored until the referral is complete, and they are successfully attending a higher level program.

Instructional Components

Approaches

As was seen above, instruction in the small group program employs generative themes using the five steps of discussion, activity, writing, reading, and outside assignment. Although it is thought best to go through all five steps every day, the facilitators are not insistent on it. If the class spends a lot of time in discussion because the issue is important, the writing or reading may wait until the next class time.

A sample lesson from the site visit had the following form:[4]

Initial Inquiry	What is freedom? Do you feel you have freedom? Is everyone in America entitled to freedom? Does freedom provide rights? If so, what are they? Do all races have rights? What can you do to obtain them?
Writing opportunity	Write a letter to the editor of the El Paso Times saying why you feel or do not feel you have freedom in your community.
Reading in context	Pass out photocopies of several paragraphs about Rosa Parks, the civil rights leader.
Supplemental activity	Field trip to view a mural by Carlos Rosas, a local artist. Have students give their own interpretation of the art work.
Home assignment	Watch the nightly news report. Tell the class about an instance where a person or people exercised their rights.

The program strives to balance oral language and literacy and stresses the importance of giving the students at the lower levels correct language input. Teachers who work with beginning learners may try to heighten students' awareness of the English words around them: push, pull, walk, don't walk, McDonalds, Burger King, etc.

Right from the beginning, the program emphasizes writing in many forms. Some of the writing has a real-world purpose such as a letter to the editor or to the local member of Congress. Additionally, the learners develop dialogues around particular issues as they come up, and they practice them in skit format. Dialogue journals are also used; students may record personal problems, customs in their family, or special activities that they enjoy.

Generating language experience stories is often a part of class. After the story has been written, the entire class may work together in a group editing process to polish a piece of writing. Typically, the sentences will be put on the board, and the facilitator will read it to the class and ask questions such as "Is there another way to say this?" Additionally, the facilitator may point out particular words that are similar in English and Spanish and lead the class in other forms of word analysis. Thus grammar comes into play during the editing process. For example, the difference between present and past tense or a question about subject-verb agreement may come up during writing or reading.

Beginning ESL learners may write in Spanish and then rewrite their work in English. At some point during the term, the facilitator may demonstrate that a mechanistic word-for-word translation from one language to the other does not make sense. For example, "falda roja" should not be translated into English as "skirt red".

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[4] Written by Celia Esparza, Small Group Coordinator.

The literacy program encourages the learners to get to know their own community, and indeed community concerns are directly a part of the curriculum. Both learners and facilitators recruit community members to come in and talk about issues of concern or interest. The physical environment of the community is also used as a point of departure for lessons. For example, field trips to the Rio Grande are incorporated into class activities.

The program tries to help students lose their fear of attending school by generating lots of praise for their accomplishments and using other self-esteem builders.

Curriculum

The program describes curriculum development as "ongoing" and this reflects the fact that both facilitators and learners participate in deciding what themes will be pursued in class. The coordinators and facilitators brainstorm together at a workshop at the beginning of a session to come up with generative themes for classes. They then develop problem posing modules that can be mixed and matched depending on the needs and interests of particular groups of learners. The program does not require that the themes be pursued in a particular order, nor indeed that those particular themes be used.

Student input on themes is solicited throughout the term. The facilitator and the students then decide, based on the needs and interests of the learners, what the curriculum will be. For example, one student had a concern she wished to discuss with the principal of her daughter's school, and this became the subject for several lessons. The class worked with her to develop a dialogue about her daughter's being moved out of bilingual education classes, and, in the course of so doing, learned about modes of address and school vocabulary.

In general, the curriculum combines community, culture, content, and communication. When researchers visited the site, class themes ran the gamut from problems such as the impact of drugs on families and the community and the participation of kids in gangs to cultures and traditions in other countries and favorite foods. Several of the facilitators with whom we met emphasized that, in the LEA programs, people learned from one another, not from books.

Materials

Materials are developed largely by the program and its staff and students. Codes used in class may be pictures cut out of magazines or newspaper stories. Authentic materials, such as stories written by other students in the program or posters they have made, will soon become codes for other classes. Eventually, the plan is for student writings to become readings for other students.

Some student writings have been gathered into a book and others have been submitted to *Voices* magazine.

Progress Assessment

A learner's progress is tracked in at least two ways, through a cumulative portfolio of her/his work and via the facilitator's formal record of her/his literacy behaviors and how they have changed.

- **Portfolio**

  A learner's work since she/he enrolled at the literacy program is kept in a portfolio. In addition, the portfolio contains notes from the facilitators who have interacted with the student. The program has developed guidelines for doing portfolio assessment, and this assessment is done several times during a session. Using unedited writing samples, the facilitator evaluates the frequency with which the student uses English and Spanish in writing, as well as technical aspects of writing such as writing on the lines and leaving spaces between words. Teachers also evaluate punctuation and correct use of verbs, adverbs, adjectives, etc. Lastly, the facilitator is asked to evaluate the affective nature of the student's writing: does she write from personal experience, express emotion, read her own writing aloud in class? In addition, the facilitator records three readings that the student has mastered during the session and provides evidence that the student understood the three selections.

- **Literacy Behaviors**

  In addition, at three times during the term (during weeks 2, 7, and 14), the facilitator assesses the changes in the student's literacy behaviors on a three point scale (never, sometimes, often). The fifteen-item literacy behavior profile asks about the student's participation in class (does the student participate verbally, express opinions, use some English, use a lot of English, participate in editing) and the student's attitude (pride in past accomplishments, display enthusiasm, show pride in work, display self-confidence).

Needs Assessment

As is common for community based programs but perhaps less common for community college literacy programs, the facilitators for the literacy classes largely come from the same neighborhoods as the learners. Most of them speak Spanish as their first language, and they understand the problems that students face. LEA has found, however, that many of the facilitators are unfamiliar with significant features of their own community, so the program arranges field trips for the facilitators to learn more about community resources and problems, for example, by examining local murals or attending city council meetings. The idea is that, if the facilitators get excited about their community, they will pass the excitement on to the adult learners.

Needs assessment is done separately by each of the Instruction Teams and takes three forms:

1. During periodic workshops, facilitators help pinpoint relevant generative themes for the classes. They brainstorm about questions for problem posing and codes (such as pictures, drawings, photos) to be used during the initial inquiry phase of a class. As members of the same community as the learners, they are familiar with the experiences that learners have.

2. At the beginning of each session, learners and facilitators work together to pinpoint themes to be explored during the term. If the themes that emerge are different from those already prepared during workshops, the class works together to develop the problem posing questions and suggest codes that are pertinent.

3. Weekly four-hour planning sessions give facilitators the opportunity to share what has happened during the past week and to analyze how students responded to different lessons. Student representatives are invited to attend these meetings.

Other Program Components

Staffing

The entire literacy program of El Paso Community College employs 12 full-time coordinators and teachers and 75 part-time instructional staff. Employing so many part-time teachers poses a challenge to the program, in that the program tries to do sophisticated things instructionally, and it takes a lot of time to implement them.

The small group instruction program has a coordinator and three levels of teaching staff:

1. There are five paid tutors (one work-study student and four other college students). They are required to have 30 hours of college and usually don't have a background in linguistics or ESL.

2. Twenty-five facilitators are employed in the small group program. They typically have taken 60 hours of college work. Facilitators work with tutors, observing their class, helping them do lesson-planning, and are involved in follow-up activities. They also help place students and go over student portfolios.

3. Two instructors also teach in the program, and they are required to have a bachelor's degree.

In hiring part-time teachers, the program looks for people who are flexible about when they can work (since some classes are in the mornings and others in the afternoons), who are not jaded about teaching literacy (often they themselves are in school), and who are bilingual. The program has recently made an effort to recruit bilingual teaching staff from all parts of the city and all socio-economic levels. The part-time staff must commit to the dynamic interactive process between learners and facilitators that the program emphasizes. As an example, the program coordinators do not want the staff to revert to teaching phonics if a language experience approach story fails to work in a particular class.

Personnel decisions are arrived at cooperatively by the LEA coordinator and the facilitators. All of the staff are encouraged to take risks and, if necessary, make mistakes. The program's philosophy is that the teachers have to try out new things.

Staff Development

Staff development activities take place both weekly and at six other times during the year. These activities are especially important since the bulk of the teaching in the program is done by people without formal training in ESL or literacy. The program conducts staff development activities on the following schedule:

weekly	Facilitators meet in a four hour sharing/planning session at the end of the week. The meetings provide continuity for the curriculum across classes, and, in some sense, create a "community of learners" among the facilitators. They discuss how the week's lessons have gone, plan the next week's activities, listen to guest speakers discuss pressing community issues, and read and discuss relevant journal articles and/or book excerpts on critical pedagogy.
3 times/year	Facilitators and coordinators participate in week-long workshops for the purpose of developing curriculum through generative theme exploration.
3 times/year	Workshops for facilitators are given by consultants. These sessions are designed to broaden the knowledge base of the teachers and extend their theoretical understanding.

Additionally, the weekly meetings sometimes are replaced by forays into the community by the coordinators, facilitators, and tutors to learn more about the social, cultural, and political environment in which they all live. For example, the instructional staff visited City Hall to see what services were available there, learned how to find out where to vote, and viewed community murals in the city. Information from these field trips for the staff is then integrated into the curriculum. In this way, the program helps to build the knowledge base of the staff.

The community speakers who are brought in respond to questions that have been submitted anonymously via a question box. The coordinator works with the speaker beforehand to make sure that the guest speaker will address the submitted questions.

Tutor Training Workshop

The tutor training workshop offered by LEA is specifically tailored to the way the program teaches.[5] The training is activity-oriented and theory-based. After an overview of the LEA program, the participants do an activity to explore the myths and realities of illiteracy: they are each given a "negative label" associated with illiteracy and asked to think about a skill in which they feel deficient. A group activity then employs those labels as participants explore how the labels make them feel. A current LEA student then details her/his background and experiences.

A discussion of natural learning versus traditional instruction follows as the next step in introducing tutors to the LEA method of teaching. Tutors are asked to brainstorm about natural processes they used to learn something recently and to contrast those with processes used in traditional public school. They also participate in an activity, called the Kingdom of Schwinndom, which involves everyone in discussing natural versus traditional learning.

At this point, the tutors are taught how to develop lessons based on student interests. The lesson model includes three steps: critical discussion, creative writing, and relevant reading. Each of these, together with allied processes such as editing, are discussed and modeled for the tutors. Participants themselves engage in choosing themes, developing critical discussion, and generating vocabulary. Other aspects of the Literacy Education Action approach, such as journal writing and supplemental learning activities using newspapers, are discussed with the tutors. In addition, tutors practice using writing evaluation instruments using actual student writing.

Lastly, the entire group of tutors reads and discusses three articles on Freirean problem posing and the use of codes in the literacy classroom.

Community Outreach

As for many literacy programs, word of mouth is the best recruiting tool for LEA's small group program. Many new students report that friends or relatives urged them to attend after they themselves had a positive experience in the program. In addition, several staff members routinely appear on the local Spanish-language television station during a half-hour call-in show. The phones at the LEA Center ring off the hook immediately after each of their appearances. Radio spots, newspaper ads, and flyers are other forms of outreach that are successful in recruiting students.

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[5] *Tutor Training Workshop*, El Paso: El Paso Community College, Literacy Education Action, n.d.

Support Services

The LEA Vocational Literacy Liaison maintains contact with a myriad of social service agencies. In the past, she has been able to assist students in obtaining free eyeglasses, abuse counseling, additional tutoring, and help for children with learning disabilities. In addition, upon entering the program students obtain a college identification card and thus have access to reduced-price bus passes, the college library, and the college job placement office.

Student Government

The small group program has a learner-initiated student government composed of 25 learners, one representative from each class. The program responded to the advent of the student government by asking them to send representatives to the weekly staff meetings. After attending just one meeting, the students already had a request: they wanted the statistics on the number of students enrolled, the number of classes, and the phone numbers of the students.

The student government set up their own procedures for taking action when a student has missed class: another student telephones to see why she/he missed class. If the person cannot be reached, a postcard is sent. After repeatedly hearing that students had missed class because they had no way to get to class or needed child care, the student government set up carpools and a cooperative day care system.

Case Two: The Cutting Edge: Workplace English

El Paso Community College offers a workplace literacy program in partnership with the Levi Strauss Company. The present program, which is job-specific and federally-funded as part of the National Workplace Literacy Program, was initiated in the fall of 1990 and focuses on line workers. However, since 1987, the community college has offered a workplace literacy program at Levi Strauss using state funding initially.

Levi Strauss has made workplace literacy a company priority and is working towards implementing literacy programs in all of their plants, not just in El Paso. Part of the company's motivation springs from the fact that it is moving towards an alternative manufacturing system or modular production in its plants. Communication with and among its workers is increasingly important.

As with other workplace literacy programs, one of the reasons that the LEA workplace literacy program is so successful is that classes are held at the workplace. Workers can go directly from work to class and back to work, if necessary. The class itself builds a community among the workers who attend: workers who had not previously known one another now exchange phone numbers and give one another rides home.

Student Characteristics

Currently, 324 limited English proficient workers have participated in literacy classes set up by the Literacy Education Action Center at seven Levi Strauss locations in El Paso. Forty percent of these workers have been with the company more than 10 years. Ninety-five percent of the workers who take the literacy classes were born in Mexico, and two-thirds of the learners are women.

As with most workplace literacy programs, many of the literacy program students at the Levi Strauss plant have some basic literacy skills. However, there are some students in Level I classes who cannot read and write in Spanish or English.

The students' motivations for enrolling in the workplace literacy program are varied: some students want to learn how to communicate in English at work, but others want to learn more English so they can get better jobs. Still others want to learn more English to communicate better with their children's schools and to help their kids with their homework.

Program Design - Workplace English

The federally-funded project's goal is to develop a replicable workplace literacy program for limited English proficient adults. From the employer's perspective, the goal of the literacy program is to get the workers to communicate more effectively on the job.

As part of the federally-funded project, the program is developing an innovative set of sixty instructional videotapes using the Levi Strauss environment as the context for language acquisition. The videotapes will be accompanied by instructional modules and an instructional guide. The same videotapes will be used for three levels of instruction, but the difficulty of the accompanying activities will depend on the learners' abilities. With the support of Levi Strauss, these videos will be designed to be generic enough to be shared with other apparel companies. The program has thus been able to do some outreach to other garment manufacturers to implement a workplace program. As of late 1990, they are negotiating with four other apparel companies to pursue workplace literacy programs.

Two company groups actively participated in the development of the workplace literacy program:

1. a task force of company officials, representing all levels of employment, worked on policy, logistics, scheduling, and the overall plan, and

2. a task force of workers who would be using the program worked on curriculum development.

As with other workplace literacy programs, this program must balance company and pedagogical concerns. For example, Levi Strauss audits every script and reading on the videotapes, and they occasionally need to edit for proprietary reasons.

Levi Strauss releases the workers for class one hour before the shift ends. So the company pays for two hours per week, and the worker contributes two hours. Classes meet for two hours, twice per week for twelve weeks.

There are three levels of literacy classes:

- The Level I class, the lowest level, is conducted almost entirely in Spanish at the beginning, but the amount of Spanish is gradually decreased as students become more comfortable with English.
- The Level II class uses about 90% English in class, but up to one-third of the students may not initially understand all that is said. Students who want to can meet with the teacher after class for an explanation in Spanish.
- The Level III class, the most advanced, uses English 100% of the time. At one site, the level III class has Korean and Thai students as well as Spanish speakers.

Adaptation of the Five-Step Model

The curriculum framework for the workplace literacy program is adapted from the five-step model described earlier:[6]

Step 1: Initial Language Input
listen to extended oral English discourse about themes related to the workplace (comprehensible input)

The first phase is not an initial inquiry in the sense of a free-ranging discussion. Rather, it is an opportunity for initial language input. The theme for a lesson might be tools at work. The topic might be introduced by the facilitator via a videotape with the voice of a narrator naming some of the tools interspersed with worker comments about their tools from interviews. Embedded in the video might be three important issues when talking about tools:

- language to describe tools on the job

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[6] Adapted loosely from *The Cutting Edge: Workplace English. Five Step Instructional Model*, El Paso: El Paso Community College, 1991.

- ergonomics
- operator-machine adjustment (concept and content)

A Level I class might focus on how the worker talks about the tools that he uses on the job. But, using the same video, the Level II class might concentrate on descriptions of the tools as they would appear in a manual.

Step 2 Language Input with Reading
read extended English discourse about themes related to the workplace theme (comprehensible input)

The workers might read the script of the videotape silently then chorally after watching the video again. Similarly, a class reading might further develop one of the subtopics introduced in the previous step. For example, the workers might read about safety in the use of tools.

Step 3 Learning Activity
chance to focus on the content of the lesson

Usually, the learners participate in group activities that apply information they have gathered in the previous steps to the real world of their workplace. For example, students might role-play how injuries might happen with the machines they use and how they can be avoided.

Step 4 Language Experience
write their own words and ideas about a topic

The writing phase of the model involves writing about the topic discussed in class, e.g., the machinery each uses in her job. For example, workers might write about what they do to avoid injury on the job. Sometimes writing takes the form of classic LEA stories, complete with group editing.

Step 5 Outside Activity
encourage learners to use English outside the classroom

Activities for a tools theme may involve talking with a co-worker about tools she uses and then writing about it for class. For a safety theme, learners may ask for a safety brochure at work and write about the rules that seem to apply to their work space.

Instructional Components - Workplace Literacy

Curriculum

The curriculum is developed collaboratively by the three coordinators, the facilitators, and the learners. A task force of workers gave input into the curriculum at the beginning of the project.

Because of the nature of the funding for the workplace literacy program, classes move through the curriculum in order, rather than having a more flexible approach to which themes are pursued, as in the small group classes.

The coordinators typically develop the lessons, but the facilitators are not locked into them. Facilitators are encouraged to respond to concerns that the workers raise. For example, one day students may want to say something about the tools they use. On another day, they may want to learn more about contractions like "don't" which appear in their reading.

The curriculum for a given class is flexible. The literacy program begins with broad-based literacy. At the beginning of a term, workers are asked "what do you really want to learn?" Workers typically respond:

- how to introduce themselves and their friends at work
- how to talk with co-workers

As a result, the workplace literacy program integrates into their classes some of the LEA Center's curriculum in survival skills.

One of the experiences of the workplace literacy team is that workers get sidetracked into talking about content, and that it is hard to maintain a focus on language.

The goal of this integrated curriculum is to help students develop problem-solving skills as well as reading, writing, speaking, and listening so that they can be more productive on their jobs.

Materials

The design of the project calls for a series of workplace literacy videotapes to be developed. Instead of a "talking heads" production, the videos use the context of the actual work environment to present a visual referent reinforced by the oral and printed word. Since each video has an accompanying 1 1/2 hour lesson that is taught by a learning facilitator, the video instruction is personalized and supported by hands-on learning experiences and integrated skill development activities. Additional advantages of the videotapes are that they bring the workplace into the classroom, and they allow work contexts to be viewed in a different way. The videotapes also are open-ended and stimulate creativity among the workers.

At the time of the site visit, ten tapes of the sixty promised in the proposal were finished and all were in progress. The process of generating the professional-quality videotapes has been much more time consuming than originally planned because it takes much longer to use the work environment than to tape a teacher in class. The program is currently field testing the job-specific curriculum. There are 20 lessons per level (three levels: beginning, intermediate and advanced).

As part of the five-step approach, the videotapes are intended to serve as the correct language input (the first step) for the workplace setting. In fact, the tapes become the substitute for the initial inquiry phase of the model. However, beyond the first few tapes which are completed, the program relies on readings (written by the staff) for its theme development.

Approaches and Methods

The workers are not often required to read and write on the job, so the program had to create opportunities for reading and writing. The need for these literacy activities fit in nicely with the five-step model. In the Level I class that we observed, the students were presented with a paragraph in English about different ways workers get paid in the garment industry. The teacher asked what this or that meant, and the students replied in Spanish and the teacher paraphrased in English. In another class, after reading a short selection describing a work-related problem, students were divided into groups of five to discuss how to solve the problem. One member of the group then made a presentation to the class on their solution.

Initial Assessment and Progress Evaluation

Initial assessment is conducted bilingually in a half-hour interview to determine students' language dominance, educational histories, and goals. Additionally, the program uses standardized tests, the Woodcock Test of Language Proficiency and the Moreno Test of English and Spanish Reading Comprehension, as pre- and post-tests. The program is investigating other ways to do initial assessment.

As with other programs, the El Paso Community College workplace literacy program is working to improve its modes of progress evaluation. Comments from the learners' supervisors are solicited by literacy program staff. The program keeps a portfolio of students' writings, and they plan to develop an analysis plan for portfolios. They are developing cloze instruments using company materials to further assess reading comprehension in job-specific contexts. Currently, the program uses cloze for self-assessment at the end of many lessons: the students complete a cloze drawn from the lesson's reading without looking at the original sheet. They then correct their own papers by comparing their answers to the original handout. In addition, comments from supervisors are solicited.

Anecdotal information offers evidence that the workers are learning English:

- a literacy student (with the support of his supervisor) was able to make a presentation in English on how to make improvements at the plant
- the class had a reading (in English) on modular manufacturing, and students were able to understand what they saw when they visited another plant to see how it worked

- a student talked to her husband in English on the phone
- a student looked over an English newspaper and reported that he could now understand some of it
- a supervisor reports that a literacy student initiates a conversation in English

Other Program Components - Workplace English

Staffing

There are three coordinators for the program, each specializing in a different area: technical, business, and instruction. These three coordinators develop the training program and train the eight learning facilitators.

Community Outreach

The workplace literacy program is voluntary. However, the communities in each plant are different and required different strategies for recruiting students. In one plant, company officials got on the public address system and made announcements in English and Spanish about the literacy classes. In another, the plant manager gave speeches in support of the program. During the recruitment phase, the Literacy Center team assessed 1000 Levi Strauss workers (1/3 of the Levi Strauss employees in El Paso). It appears that the key to success of the workplace literacy program is the willingness on the part of the plant managers to promote the program.

Staff Development

Staff development occurs on two levels: Three full-time coordinators develop the program collaboratively, each according to her own area of expertise: technical, business, and education. On another level, the three coordinators interact with the eight learning facilitators (largely not teachers with degrees) to work out the practical problems of implementing the lessons. This process enables ongoing curriculum evaluation and revisions. Coordinators know on a weekly basis what is working and what is not and can make necessary changes before completing videos and lessons.

Support Services

A guidance specialist is available 20 hours a week to assist students with vocational counseling, make educational referrals and provide information on resources that may be needed by students so they can successfully complete educational goals.

Other Literacy Education Action Programs

Self-paced Lab

In September 1990, the LEA Center opened a self-paced lab, staffed part-time by two facilitators and two tutors. The lab is used by at least 50 students as a supplement to other programs they are attending — the Center has a general policy that students can use the lab only if they are enrolled in a literacy program although some exceptions have been made. They have four IBM computers, one Apple computer, six audio-cassette recorders, and two video monitors. They attach an "Audio-Vox" to the computer so students can speak into a microphone and play back their own voices.

In line with the "correct language input" philosophy of the program's reading consultant, the program uses their more than 100 books on audio-cassette tape to develop students' fluency. The method has three steps: the student reads a book alone, then she listens to someone reading the book while following along, and, lastly, she reads the book to a tutor. Facilitators assign students at all levels to listen to books. The program sees several advantages to employing audio tapes: first, student don't have to reveal that they don't know how to pronounce a word, and, second, students don't get stuck on a particular word.

In terms of computer use, in general, a facilitator will recommend which of the available software packages a student should use. A member of the lab staff sits with the student during the initial visit to assess whether particular software is too easy or too hard. The lab staff keep track of what the student uses, how well the student does, and communicates with the facilitators via a notebook in which comments are recorded.

Software used in the lab includes a number of grammar programs, a language experience approach program, a tutorial program of key words a person might encounter on the job, an authorable program that allows students to hear words associated with pictures or text on the screen, some basic reading and writing programs, and two programs that feature the use of Spanish.

Tele-LEA

The Tele-LEA videotape instructional program, a 12-week ESL literacy program, originated with funding from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to do live interactive televised instruction (Tele-LEA).

Tele-LEA is currently available at ten different sites throughout El Paso including housing projects, community centers, libraries, and the college campuses. Students enrolled in tele-LEA meet twice per week for two hours each time. The program strives for a classroom atmosphere and provides tutorial assistance. Students often include women in public housing with children in public schools.

The Tele-LEA program was one of the catalysts for the National Workplace Literacy Program at Levi Strauss since that company was one of the eight locations originally chosen for the 12-week ESL literacy program.

The tele-LEA videotapes are now one of the Center's primary modes of serving outlying areas. In these locations, learners have their own copy of the videotapes and access to a tutor trained at the Center.

Family Initiative for English Literacy (FIEL)

When the National English Literacy Demonstration Program solicited nominations of innovative ESL literacy programs in late 1990, Project FIEL, a family literacy program which had served about 150 families over 3 years in urban and rural settings, looked particularly promising as a site to visit. But the program was not refunded by the federal Family English Literacy Program (FELP) in the summer of 1991. While the grant has ended and not been extended, a member of the FIEL staff is working with the five school districts where the program has been implemented to retain the program.

Like the Levi Strauss workplace literacy program, Project FIEL had been preceded by an earlier project in 1986 and 1987 funded by the Texas Education Agency. The five step curriculum had featured literacy skills development as well as development of appropriate role modeling behavior. The focus was on enabling parents of pre-school and primary school children to help their children and to develop their own literacy skills.

Program Design - FIEL

The FIEL program represented a cooperative venture between the public schools and the local community college in which teachers were trained to implement a family literacy curriculum immediately after school when the parents came to pick up their children. The curriculum was also taught in the regular classroom at school.

A special feature of Project FIEL was the project's effort to get new educational professionals involved in family literacy by offering a course based on the FIEL curriculum in the early childhood education department at the community college.

Description of Literacy Component - FIEL

Elizabeth Quintero, the Project FIEL director, developed a five step curriculum using generative themes based on a Freirean model. The curriculum integrated theories about whole language learning and biliteracy development with social context. It used participatory inter-generational activities to enhance the literacy development of parents and children in both English and

Spanish. A goal of the program was "to empower the parents to connect the literacy activities to their own lives, thus encouraging their use of literacy for personal and community purposes."

Assessment - FIEL

Learner progress was assessed through a portfolio of the work of both parents and children. Additionally, progress indicators were developed through the use of ethnographic techniques: each class was videotaped, and non-participant observers made notes on behavior change and skill development. Teachers also submitted observations. All data was compiled into case study reports on the progress of participants.

Community Outreach

Recruitment for this program included doing outreach to parents in their neighborhoods. This was done through a one hour meeting (or rap session), called "Platicas", with parents during which different community representatives discussed resources and services in the community that are available for parents. Outside speakers were brought to the class to discuss a variety of crucial topics identified by parents such as discipline, drugs, and sex. The project directors worked with PTAs to adopt the program. A supplemental Reading is Fundamental (RIF) Program grant was received to provide books for elementary school children in one district.

Project FORWARD Welfare Reform Program

This project has as its goal the development of a life planning curriculum for AFDC recipients and is part of the Texas response to the national JOBS legislation. The curriculum integrates the development of language, literacy, and basic skills with two goals in mind: to enable learners to become more self-sufficient and to make it possible for them to gain employment above the minimum wage level. The program moves through the life-skills curriculum in order, but the students incorporate their own life experiences into the lessons. An objective of the project is to write and disseminate a handbook incorporating lesson plans and strategies for implementation, including instructional strategies for limited English proficient learners.

The students in Project FORWARD receive 400 hours of instruction. Classes meet for four hours per day, with two hours of group instruction and two hours of individualized instruction tailored to the learner's needs and goals. In at least two ways, Project FORWARD uses some of the same structure as other LEA literacy programs:

1. The group instruction employs a modified version of the five step model for units on topics such as self-concept, career, health/nutrition, community, and culture.

2. They employ a two-week version of the Exploration class for new learners. This class places importance on interpersonal relations and a classroom environment conducive to self-initiated learning.

LEA's involvement with Project FORWARD will have statewide implications. The JOBS program has a staff person who works very closely with LEA and who meets with the literacy program staff weekly. LEA has developed a partnership with the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Department of Human Services through which LEA obtained funding to train other teachers in the Project FORWARD curriculum and approach.

One-to-one Tutoring and Classes Taught by Volunteers

The individualized program, which was the precursor of the LEA small group instruction, has continued as a volunteer program. It currently has both paid and unpaid tutors who offer individualized instruction at 24 sites throughout the city and county of El Paso. Potential literacy students who are not necessarily vocationally-oriented and thus do not meet the criteria for the Perkins funding of the small group instruction program (e.g., retired persons) are steered toward the volunteer classes which are held at libraries, churches, and CBOs.

The Literacy Center holds free volunteer tutor training sessions once each month. During the training, tutors are introduced to the idea that people will learn to read and write while exploring topics that interest them. They are given training in how to develop theme-based lessons that begin with critical discussion, go on to some kind of writing, allow for some relevant reading, and culminate with a related activity.[7] Enrichment sessions covering a number of topics offer tutors the opportunity for more training throughout the year. For example, a four-hour workshop on Freire was held in October 1990. How to assess tutors is one of the areas with which the program is grappling.

Other Program Initiatives

Networking

LEA participates in the city-wide El Paso Literacy Coalition. The Coalition's principal mission is to generate community awareness of and support for literacy programs. One way this is done is by sponsoring fund-raising events such as a corporate spelling bee. For this event, local companies pay an entry fee for the privilege of entering a contestant in a spelling contest with other companies. The Coalition has a roundtable for directors of literacy programs which serves as a support group for smaller providers.

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[7] Kay Taggart, *Tutor Handbook*, El Paso: El Paso Community College, Literacy Education Action, 1991.

Use of Consultants

More than other programs, the Literacy Education Action director has not hesitated to hire consultants to assist with various aspects of program design. For example, Raul Añorve helped them adapt his model for involving workers in curriculum development. A reading consultant, Dee Tadlock, advised them about the need for correct language input for students acquiring a second language.

SITE VISIT CONDUCTED: September 16-18, 1991

INTERVIEWEES:

Carol Clymer Spradling — LEA Program Director

Literacy Education Action
Kay Taggart — LEA Coordinator
Celia Esparza — Small Group facilitator
Martha Toscano — Exploration coordinator
Sonia Avila — Vocational Education Liaison
Chris Casas — Tutor, small group instruction
Martha Torres — Tutor, small group instruction

Levi Strauss National Workplace Literacy Program
Ann Savino - Technical Coordinator
Barbara Austin - Business Coordinator
Dorothy Barron - Instructional Coordinator
Jean Soto — Facilitator
Isabel Pinon — Facilitator

Project FORWARD
Barbara Baird — Coordinator
Noemi Aguilar — Instructor

Project FIEL
Ana Macias — Project Coordinator

Site Report

Literacy/ESL Program
International Institute of Rhode Island

375 Broad Street
Providence, RI 02907

Literacy/ESL Specialists:
Janet Isserlis and Francine Collignon

Education Division Director:
Sara Smith

> **"I could not teach them the way I had been taught."**
> - ESL literacy teacher

Total Number of Literacy Students 60

Key Components

- community-based organization offering educational and social services
- small group classes at principal location
- off-site literacy classes
- highly-skilled teachers

Special Features

- emergent curriculum in learner-centered classes
- collaborative model of staff development
- action research projects
- alternative assessment
- strong commitment to viewing literacy in a social context

Funding Sources for Literacy-Related Activities

- State of Rhode Island
- Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust
- Hasbro Charitable Foundation
- Providence Journal Charitable Foundation
- Rhode Island Workforce 2000
- Fleet Charitable Trust
- Hazard Charitable Trust
- Rhode Island Foundation
- P.H. Prince Testamentary Trust
- Nortek Charitable Trust
- Textron Charitable Trust

Background/Program Context

The International Institute of Rhode Island (IIRI) is a community-based nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting immigrants and refugees in Providence, Rhode Island. The agency develops and operates programs offering educational, legal, immigration, vocational, and personal services, and it has both an education division and a social service division. The education division of the Institute has offered ESL classes to Rhode Island's immigrants and refugees since 1971. In early 1991, the education division operated five programs: (1) the English Language Center which provides ESL instruction and cultural orientation; (2) the Literacy/ESL program, which offers literacy classes, teacher education, and community outreach for non-native speakers of English; (3) the citizenship/ESL program for those preparing for naturalization; (4) the amnesty program which offers ESL and pre-GED instruction to those eligible for amnesty under IRCA; (5) the vocational training program which offers ESL, orientation to the world of work, job training, and placement; and (6) worksite ESL literacy programs.

The ESL literacy component of the Institute began in February 1988 when a three-year project, the literacy/ESL program, was funded to offer ESL literacy education and to train ESL teachers in understanding literacy and addressing it in the ESL classroom. The project ended in February 1991, but the literacy/ESL classes continue under the aegis of the larger ESL program. The literacy/ESL classes are taught by Janet Isserlis and Francine Filipek Collignon and overseen by Sara Smith in her role as director of the Education Division. There is a waiting list for the literacy/ESL classes.

The literacy/ESL program utilizes a collaborative model in interacting with learners and with colleagues. The program's curriculum has evolved from a traditional competency-based emphasis to a more learner-centered, participatory curriculum. The use of alternative assessment is a particularly innovative component of this program.

Student Characteristics

The Institute serves every year approximately 180 ESL students who come from a variety of different countries including Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Portugal, El Salvador, and the former Soviet Union. The program also serves Spanish-speaking students from the U.S. (e.g., Puerto Rico). Many students are refugees.

In the 1980s, the Institute served mostly Southeast Asians when refugee funding was used to provide language and literacy services. But people from other countries quickly sought and received services because the Institute did not have constraints on whom they had to serve. The students seem to be very loyal to the literacy/ESL classes. "How many do you need?" was the student response when one teacher said she was not sure if they had enough students to start a class. Family members often attend class together at the Institute.

The literacy/ESL program was designed to meet the needs of non-native speakers of English with the following characteristics:

- four or fewer years of schooling in their native country
- native language does not use the Roman alphabet
- little or no literacy in the native language or in English
- unable to make progress in regular ESL classes for reasons associated with literacy

Program Design

The overall goal of the literacy/ESL program was to increase access to literacy learning opportunities for non-native speakers of English. IIRI offers four literacy/ESL classes to approximately 60 students; classes are small with usually about 12 to 15 learners in each. The staff has moved the program toward a more learner-centered, collaborative approach, and the goals of individual learners are addressed within this learner-centered context.

One unique aspect of the program design is the collaborative model used both within the classroom to guide teachers and students who are seen as co-learners and among the teaching staff.

The design of the program has included outreach to professionals outside IIRI. As part of the funded project, the three practitioners involved in the literacy/ESL program have written a handbook to document the development of the many facets of the program and the changes which occurred in the agency during the program.[8]

Literacy/ESL students stay in a class until they and the teacher decide that it is time to be promoted. So, for example, students who have completed a full cycle may be in the same class with someone who has never before attended this or any other school. Students who have been in the class awhile, and are thus more advanced, become peer coaches and teaching assistants, helping other students and serving as scribes for some class activities. Students typically "try out" the class at the next level by attending it once or twice before agreeing to be promoted. Students are sometimes reluctant to leave their friends in the first class and move on.

The intent of the literacy/ESL program is to prepare students and give them confidence so that, when they enter a mainstream ESL class, they will have the literacy skills to allow them to focus directly on the language.

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[8] Francine Filipek Collignon, Janet Isserlis, and Sara Smith, *A Handbook for Practitioners: ESL/literacy for adult non-native speakers of English*, Providence: International Institute of Rhode Island, 1991.

Instructional Components

Curriculum

IIRI literacy/ESL staff believe that "curriculum cannot be predetermined" and view curriculum development as an ongoing process. Thus, teachers do not have a fixed curriculum or a mandated set of competencies or skills that they must teach. Instead, the teachers work together and with learners in the class to develop the curriculum as the class proceeds. Learner input is invited at each session.

There are, however, several organizing principles, called "recurrent events" in the parlance of the literacy/ESL program, that provide structure and predictability for the literacy classes. One of these is the generation of the Class News, one page of learner-generated information that is used to facilitate the development of reading and writing skills. Thus the Class News is part of both the curriculum development and the materials development processes. As the class becomes familiar with the routine of giving their news each week and hearing and then reading that of their fellow learners, the focus moves away from the format and onto the content of what people say. Another "recurrent event" might be that the first person to enter the classroom writes the day and date on the blackboard. Other recurrent events in the literacy/ESL classes, besides collecting the class news, include reading and working with the typed version of the class news, generating stories about photos that are brought in, conversations, dialogue journal writing, and additional language experience activities. Through recurrent events, content (themes and topics) emerge and the curriculum is created through this process.

The program emphasizes the process of literacy development through a strong focus on learner-generated content. For example, whereas a prescribed curriculum might focus on life skills topics such as shopping, transportation, and health, topics of interest and importance to the learners in the literacy/ESL program come up spontaneously during the classes. Learners and teachers are co-educators in the learning process. The teacher acts as a facilitator who "guides learners through various language and literacy events and activities derived from learner-generated content." For example, as Mother's Day approaches, literacy students discuss customs for honoring women and mothers. Later, the class generates a grid of men's and women's work amid lively discussion.

IIRI literacy/ESL staff facilitate an integration of language skills development through emphasis on mutual dialogue, problem-posing, and the use of a variety of texts which meet the specific needs and interests of learners. Literacy/ESL staff describe their approach to curriculum as process as "attentive listening and transformation of learners' themes into literacy activity."

Approaches and Methods

As discussed above, the literacy/ESL program views its teaching approaches and methods and creation of materials as a process. Program staff have facilitated the generation of a great deal of learner writing, and this writing forms the majority of the reading material used by the learners in the program. The Class News (discussed below) and dialogue journals are two of the principal forms of writing used in this way.

In looking for supplementary texts, literacy/ESL program staff sought materials that offer learners multiple ways in which to interact with text. For example, learners might be able to interact with the visual images in a book,

> develop their own pre-reading questions, or even do some writing themselves prior to interacting with the text on the page. Other texts may provide less visual input, but are of high interest or relevance to a given group of learners at a particular time. Other materials are not texts at all but rather consist of print realia brought to class by learners: photos, post cards, flyers, and other visual or print images of interest to the group.[9]

Cross-topics

"Cross-topics" are language and literacy units that are used in more than one specific context. Literacy/ESL program facilitators employ cross-topics within the larger context of a problem-posing approach in order to connect learners' knowledge and experience to the topics that come up in class. For example, money or clarification can be taught separately and/or in the contexts of banking, housing, and shopping. For example, familiarity with numbers might be taught like this: A teacher may write the numbers from 1 to 99 on the board. Various members of the class then write and read them. The numbers are then written on cards for bingo, and the whole class plays. The class then moves on to discuss dollars and cents and the use of numbers. Finally, there might be a number dictation, followed by practicing writing down each other's phone numbers with attendant discussion of clarification (Was that 415 or 615?) and ways of saying the numbers (zero/oh).

Class News

One method that is used to produce learner-generated materials is the weekly production of the one-page Class News by the literacy learners. News from each student is gathered via a process that draws upon the Language Experience Approach (LEA). The teacher might ask each student what she/he did last weekend. The more advanced students might then go to the board and write a few words or sentences describing what happened. Those who cannot yet write might dictate to the teacher who then writes on the board exactly what the student says. After class, the teacher types the news that is written on the board and makes copies available to the learners at the next class meeting. Members of the class might then take turns reading one another's news aloud. By treating each person's contribution to the news as a whole text (e.g., "Sasha, please read Jose's news"), the Class News reflects a whole language philosophy in which "meaningful units of language are elicited, written, and read by learners."[10]

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[9] From the Program Nomination Form for the International Institute of Rhode Island, January 1991.

Various spin-off language and literacy activities can follow reading the Class News. The topics about which the students have written and read may then be featured in problem-posing or life-skills activities. Or the Class News may become the vehicle for a language activity ("Circle all the words that begin with D") or an information exercise ("How many women are in the room?").

The important feature of the Class News is that it allows students to share information about events that they consider important and to read and write in a context that is meaningful to them. These reading and writing activities are not just for practice; they enable students to communicate with one another via print.

The Class News also enables students to work collaboratively, for, once the learners become familiar with the process, students help a learner who gropes for the right word and a learner who has difficulty spelling what she just said. Because the news comes directly from the students, it is automatically at the correct level for them. In addition, since reporting their news gives learners an opportunity to say something about their lives outside of school, meaningful communication often results and students get to know one another. Nationality, gender, and age differences are not important for this activity since everybody did something last weekend (even if it was sleeping or cleaning the house).

Generating class news is an appropriate activity for multilevel classes. Those with different levels of English proficiency can all contribute something to the news. Moreover, students whose writing skills are more advanced can take turns writing down the news of their fellow classmates, and even beginning writers can be encouraged to take a turn as the scribe.

Using learners' photos for the subject of Language Experience Approach (LEA) stories

In several of the literacy/ESL classes at IIRI, we observed the class generating stories based on photographs that learners had brought to share (sometimes the teacher also brings in a photo to share). In one ESL/literacy class in which the six students were all native Spanish-speakers, a woman named Regina[11] brought in pictures from her daughter's first birthday party. Everyone had a photocopy of the picture. First the class tried to come up with a title. After much discussion in Spanish, the suggestions were "Party at the house of Regina" and "Happy Birthday Party." Finally, Regina settled on "Birthday Party Anabel Jimenez." The title was the result of negotiation of classmates with each other. (Regina had first written "Birthdays Party" because she had copied the spelling from a poster of Class Birthdays that was on the wall.)

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[10] Janet Isserlis, "Beginning Learners Write for Each Other: The News," in *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy* by Heide Spruck Wrigley and Gloria J. A. Guth, San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International, 1992.

[11] Regina, who was from the Dominican Republic, had never been to school before.

Regina, who had gone to the board to serve as scribe, then told the learners to ask her questions about the party in order to generate the story. Asking questions about what is in the picture is the usual way that literacy/ESL learners build stories from photographs. Essentially, the learners serve as the experts, negotiating meaning and deciding what words to use. Co-teaching and co-learning are the modes of instruction and everyone stays involved as they contribute words, suggestions, and changes. In Regina's story below, one student wanted to change the opening word of the story to "at the". This led to a discussion of when one might say "at," (e.g., at the store, at the market). Even questions of spelling are turned back to the students by the teacher: when one student asked if "olso" was correct, she responded by asking what would be better. Learners volunteered various changes in wording. When the students asked the teacher questions about pronunciation, she asked students what is the right way to say it.

Birthday Party Anabel Jimenez

> **In**[12] birthday party of my daughter the people drink beer eat[13] rice[14]
> **roast**[15] porc **potater**[16] salad green salad
> **olso**[17] drink wine and dance.
> The children drink soda eat potatoer chip cookies **kake**[18] candy and **give**[19]
> small toys.

Introducing print

Learners are introduced to print in a way that builds on the substantial body of knowledge that adult students already have. That is, the program tries to look at learners' strengths rather than employing a deficit model. Like other forms of instruction at the literacy/ESL program, introducing print is viewed as a process, a process that begins with names and images that learners have in common. You won't find lists of numbers and lists of letters in literacy/ESL classrooms. Rather, learners learn to recognize letters and numbers in a context. For example, a class of non-literate learners whom we observed had been introduced to the letters through the posting of a class list of members' names. They learned numbers by looking at the calendar, saying their own ages and birthdates, and writing one another's birthdates on the board.

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[12] Classmate wanted this changed to "At the."

[13] Regina tried out various spellings of eat at the bottom of the board before settling on this one.

[14] Regina later added "with green beans" here after she asked her classmates what was the English word for pinos.

[15] Regina had been unclear how to spell roast and one of her classmates suggests that the word ends in "st".

[16] Regina corrected this spelling to "potatoer" and the teacher much later suggested that "potato" may be correct.

[17] A classmate asked the teacher if this spelling was correct.

[18] A learner corrected this spelling to "cake".

[19] Regina added this word later.

Basically, the program believes that literacy education should start where the learners are with print and then move them beyond that. For example, one man, who was a basketball fan, knew only the word "Celtics." Later he learned two new words, "Pistons" and "Bulls," the names of two other teams he was familiar with.

Classroom observation

A beginning literacy-level class that we observed offered examples of how print was introduced and how students developed metacognitive skills. The class was composed of people from all over the world (Dominican Republic, Syria, Laos, Guatemala), and some of them knew no English and could neither read nor write in their native language. In response to discovering that many of the students had no idea where the U.S. was in relation to their native country or indeed where their native country was, the teacher had put up a map of the world. Each student's name was written on a card to the side of the map, and a piece of string linked the student's name with a pin in the country from which she/he came.

Several students were asked one by one to go to the map and find their native country. Some students stared at the map and couldn't find their country (although they had done this activity before). Other students put their fingers right on the appropriate place. Still others looked down the list of cards until they found their own name and then followed the string to the pin showing where their country was. Clearly students had been introduced to and remembered different strategies for finding their country on the map.

Other activities based on the theme of native countries took place during class. For example, the teacher asked several students how many hours it took by plane to go from their country to the United States. Then the teacher asked students to say the name of the country from which a classmate came when she called out her/his name. Finally, students are asked to write on a piece of paper the name of their native country.

While they were doing that, a group activity began. The teacher made three columns on the board: one for name, one for country, and one for birthdate in numbers (e.g., 7-16-48). She then called on Maria from the Dominican Republic to start by writing her name, country, number of letters in her country's name, and birthdate. Maria had been unclear as to whether her country's name had one or two words and failed to leave a space between the words. Maria then acted as teacher and chose which classmate should go next.

The class seemed to have difficulty with converting the name of a month to the corresponding number (e.g., March is 3) and with saying their birth year. Given their limited English skills and limited literacy, it was unclear whether the learners did not know the numbers, did not know the names of the numbers in English, did not know when they were born, or could not connect the numbers with the appropriate month. At the teacher's request, the most advanced student in the class (Mario) had made a chart on a large piece of paper of the names of the months and the corresponding numbers while the previous activity was going on. The teacher asked one student what month he was born in and what number that is. Since he did not know, she asked him how he would find out. After thinking about it, he pointed to the chart Mario had made.

The teacher employed a number of activities appropriate for the multilevel classroom. Mario both had a special task and he was asked to sit next to a learner who might need extra support. Students were paired across ethnicity for reading grids or charts. Writing/copying from the board allowed students to proceed at their own pace.

Initial Assessment

Many of the new students in the IIRI literacy classes are new arrivals in the U.S. Some of them have no idea what school is. In terms of goals, "for English" is about as specific as some can be when asked why they want to attend classes.

During intake, a staff member assesses an individual's ability to interact with print via several activities, such as reading and filling out a simple registration form. If the person does these easily, the interviewer invites her/him to engage in other language and literacy activities such as labelling pictures of realia, describing a photograph, and reading and writing a paragraph. The interviewer also pursues questions to elicit the learner's previous education and current educational goals. Sometimes an interpreter is provided by the Institute and other times the individual brings along a family member or friend to do the translating.

Students are grouped generally in classes by similarities of their oral proficiency in English and their previous exposure to print.

Progress Evaluation

Like literacy teachers at other programs, the IIRI literacy/ESL teachers have a few benchmarks that help them know that students are learning. Teachers can tell that students feel more confident of their English when a student chooses a partner of another ethnicity and communicates in English or when learners change roles and someone who never spoke now provides an answer to her classmates' questions. Persuasive though this anecdotal evidence may be, the literacy/ESL staff realized that they needed to have better ways of documenting learner progress.

After finding existing standardized tests of little use for their literacy learners, literacy/ESL program staff developed over time their own process and format for recording learner gains. This alternative framework for documenting learner progress allows teachers to get a sense of what the program sees as successful learning and to document changes that occur in their students. As a starting point, the program examined existing tests and found them to be either too difficult or too simplistic for their students. They also explored how other countries, particularly England, grappled with thorny assessment issues.

Moving back and forth between evaluation theory and their own classroom practice, they followed an action research model that involved four phases: (1) planning, (2) action, (3) observation, and (4) reflection. Through a process that was cyclical and recursive, they documented the issues they thought about, the interactions they observed, the activities they implemented, and the results they saw. The teachers who did this research were interested in how learners learn and how that learning could be documented.

As they analyzed their observations, the categories that emerged were represented in the form of a grid. They were refined over a couple of years with input from practitioners and researchers. The final grid (below) serves as an alternative assessment framework..[20] The grid shows the progress of one student who had come to the Institute, not ready to read and write, but very much concerned about alphabet issues. After he had left the Institute and worked with a tutor for awhile, the student returned ready for literacy

[See Evaluation Grid, next page]

In addition to the information about learner progress contained in the grid, the literacy/ESL program keeps folders of student work. Included in the folders are writing samples and ongoing anecdotal reports.

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[20] For a discussion of the evaluation grid and the process that led to its creation, see Francine Filipek Collignon, Janet Isserlis, and Sara Smith, *A Handbook for Practitioners: ESL/literacy for adult non-native speakers of English*, Providence: International Institute of Rhode Island, 1991.

Evaluation Grid

	Intake Interview Feb. 29/88	6 Month Evaluation	1 Year Evaluation	Recommendation re ongoing placement Oct 2/89
Oral Fluency	can make himself understood; been in country since 1966	absent from Jul. - Nov. Little change		Called in August. Was out of country from Feb. 89 - June 89
Aural Comprehension	can understand most English spoken in observable context	as before/ fossilization	as before	will be placed in same class if he returns
Interactive Behavior	seems to like people; likes sharing his ideas and opinions	As R came to know people, he would respond to them very warmly. If he didn't feel close to people, he'd ignore them/not learn their names.		
Cognitive Skills	no sound/symbol recognition; very little retention of words he's been shown	seemed to make little visible progress during this period	returned with firm grasp of alphabet in English; has begun retaining some sight works and volunteering for writing tasks; beginning to share and derive meaning from print	
Metacognitive Awareness	knows he wants to learn to read/write; on third day asked for work with alphabet	always heads notebook page with title "Writing"; asks for certain kinds of assistance	heads pages with "Writing" + date + alphabet in English; has begun retaining some sight works and volunteering for writing tasks; beginning to share and derive meaning from print	
Literacy Goals	unclear		to read: says "reading is very important to read bills"	
Employment Goals	unclear; vision and other problems might preclude serious employment goals	never explicitly mentioned: seems that R can't really work		
Health	see above	vision problems continue; no longer able to drive; could not come to school; given home tutoring		

Used with permission from Collignon, Isserlis, and Smith, *A Handbook for Practitioners*, 1991

Other Program Components

Community Outreach

The extensive needs assessment (discussed below) conducted by IIRI in the Providence immigrant and refugee community served to make people aware of IIRI's educational services. Staff from the literacy/ESL program, in particular, have worked among the target community for a number of years and maintain ongoing contact with social service providers and the language minority communities.

The literacy/ESL program also does community outreach through providing services off-site at a housing project, learners' homes, and a Southeast Asian mental health support group.

Needs Assessment

IIRI conducted an extensive needs assessment when the literacy/ESL program first started in 1988 in order to determine whether there were gaps in the provision of literacy opportunities for non-native speakers of English. Program staff conducted the needs assessment over a six month period by contacting students, teachers, administrators, members of the ESL population who had not accessed literacy education programs, and service providers likely to come in contact with the ESL population (health/mental health workers, educational and social service providers, grass-roots community leaders, and bilingual/bicultural workers). Many of these people responded to both personal interviews and written surveys. IIRI staff took particular care to include people who stated a need for literacy education but were not currently enrolled and those who had dropped out of programs.

Interviewers were interested in data regarding the needs and barriers to literacy provision. They arranged the needs of learners into the following categories: attitudinal, circumstantial, programmatic, and pedagogical. These categories reflect needs and/or barriers to learning which influence "1) the dispositions of the individual, e.g., his/her own self perceptions and attitudes about learning/literacy, 2) life situations beyond his/her control, e.g., transportation and child care issues, 3) issues within program structures, such as inappropriate time, place and/or focus of classes, and 4) concerns, for example, about perceptions of literacy, effective instruction in literacy, etc."[21]

Literacy/ESL program staff displayed the results of the needs assessment in a written document and grid. The columns of the grid listed various groups of interested parties: pre-literate learners, other learners, ESL population, educational staff at IIRI, other educators, and the community. The rows represented different categories of needs that these parties had: programmatic needs (more learning opportunities, appropriate materials, more funding), situational needs (learners need childcare and better health, educators need information about ESL literacy), attitudinal needs (self-esteem, freedom, cultural sensitivity), interactive needs (socialization, communication), cognitive needs (literacy skills, understanding of how to teach literacy), and metacognitive needs (strategies for interacting with print, ability to recognize literacy needs of learners).[22]

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[21] From the Program Nomination Form for the International Institute of Rhode Island, January 1991.

The results indicated that immigrants and refugees needed better access to ESL literacy. Common barriers included inadequate access to information about literacy programs; poor access to literacy instruction itself; and lack of support services such as childcare, counseling, and transportation. Situational factors that prevented potential learners from accessing literacy education involved lack of prior education and/or native language literacy; unfamiliarity with the Roman alphabet; and unsuccessful experiences with introduction to print in mainstream ESL classes.

Additionally, education service providers articulated concerns that affective, cognitive, metacognitive, and interactive factors figured strongly in the determination of whether literacy learners would benefit from instruction. Therefore, the IIRI staff paid particular attention to these aspects of learning when setting up the literacy/ESL program.

Staffing

Program Staff

The literacy/ESL program utilizes a team of two teachers and the support of the director of the Education Division. Both teachers are highly-skilled in teaching language and literacy as a result of formal education and a decade of experience working with refugees. In addition, somewhat unusually, both have interest in and knowledge of the latest research in language teaching, and they are able to link theory with their own practice on a daily basis. That is, the teachers are aware of a number of different frameworks for teaching language and literacy, and they are able to make informed choices among them as the cycle progresses.

Action Research

The literacy/ESL program staff believe that curriculum development and curriculum implementation are "intricately connected to teacher education, to action research, and especially to learners' development." As part of the three-year project, the literacy/ESL teachers reflected upon their own practice and began to systematize that reflection through the inquiry strategies of action research. Questions about learners' progress and what seems to work may in turn lead to answers that feed into the constantly evolving curriculum. Therefore, action research may influence curriculum by causing teachers to renegotiate the curriculum with their colleagues or with the learners. It has been the experience of the literacy/ESL program that, as teachers become more aware of the needs of learners and how they are or are not being met, they become interested in aligning other components of the program (progress evaluation, materials) with learner needs. Thus action research serves as both a means of staff development to facilitate teachers' examining their own practice and a catalyst for further change within the program.

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[22] For an illustration of how the grid was used, see Francine Filipek Collignon, Janet Isserlis, and Sara Smith, *A Handbook for Practitioners: ESL/literacy for adult non-native speakers of English*, Providence: International Institute of Rhode Island, 1991.

Staff Development

The literacy/ESL program staff provided teacher training for other teachers in ESL programs. The original goal had been to determine the extent of participants' knowledge and understanding about ESL literacy learning among non-native English speakers in order to develop appropriate workshop process and content. But a much more collaborative model of staff development for the agency staff evolved. Literacy staff collaborated with individual teachers in expanding awareness of literacy processes and promoting inquiry and interaction. This contact took many forms: workshops, conferences, meetings, and regular classroom observation and/or demonstrations. In addition, similar workshop sessions were held for volunteers at the program.

Volunteers

Literacy/ESL classes use volunteers in the classroom. As much as possible, the teachers encourage the volunteers to sit next to the students during class and participate. Initially, some of the volunteers may want to take students out of class for tutoring or observe the class from the back of the room. It is an important step for the volunteers to see that speaking in class is a valuable contribution to the learners.

Some of the volunteers have had formal training in ESL or literacy and come to the Institute to observe and then get hooked. These volunteers get a form of on-the-job training since the staff responds to their query of what they could have done differently. The philosophy at the literacy/ESL program is very much that the learners should help each other and ask each other questions. In this respect, the volunteers are treated as other resources, not authority figures, by the learners.

Support Services

Because IIRI is a social service agency, the literacy/ESL program has access to a large referral network. Although the program does not have the resources to provide childcare or transportation, the program does allow children to attend classes with their parents and their presence is supported in the classrooms. IIRI offers bilingual assistance to students outside of class, and some bilingual speakers are employed on an as-needed basis.

SITE VISIT CONDUCTED: May 22-24, 1991

INTERVIEWEES

Janet Isserlis — teacher/coordinator
Francine Filipek Collignon — teacher/coordinator
Sara Smith — director, education division
John Medeiros — teacher/counselor

Site Report

UAW-Chrysler Tech Prep Academy

Administrative Office:
Eastern Michigan University
Corporate Services
3075 Washtenaw
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Reading teacher: Cordelia Christopher

Program Director: Rena Soifer

Administrator: Beth Van Voorhees

> **"The heart and soul of it [the program] is the workers."**
> - Program Director

> **The teachers treat the students "just like friends."**
> - ESL literacy learner

Number of ESL Students	21 in 2 years
Total Number of Students	355 in 2 years

(Students are counted for each session attended.)

Key Components

- union-sponsored worksite program
- small multilevel classes
- individual attention
- ESL literacy students combined with native English speakers

Special Features

- flexible class schedule for workers
- based on an explicit whole language model

Funding Sources for Literacy-Related Activities

- United Auto Workers union (originally, union and management)

Background/Program Context

The Technical Preparation Program (Tech Prep) is a collaboration between the United Auto Workers (UAW) and Chrysler Motors. Tech Prep

> is a comprehensive program designed to ensure that all UAW-represented Chrysler workers have the basic skills needed to learn more advanced and complex technological skills, and to more successfully meet the challenges of their work and personal lives. The program ... concentrates on basic math and literacy skills ....[1]

The program sponsors classes for workers at several different plants. At some locations, the public school systems run the Tech Prep programs. At the Chrysler engine plant in Trenton, Michigan, Eastern Michigan University (EMU) provides the basic skills services under contract. EMU won the contract after Rena Soifer, a professor at EMU, approached the National Training Center, jointly sponsored by Chrysler and the UAW, about the possibility of implementing her Academy model at one of their sites. The Academy model employs teaching and learning approaches "based on a whole language framework," and programs have been using it since 1979.[2] The Trenton Tech Prep Academy program was funded for several years by both the UAW and Chrysler through affiliation with the National Training Center. Beginning in 1990, however, the union alone has paid for the program at the Trenton plant.

The Trenton Tech Prep Academy program offers reading and writing, math, and GED classes to union members. The classrooms for the program are in a comfortably-furnished trailer located outside the main plant buildings. The reading and writing classes are small (less than 10 students per class), multilevel, and combine ESL students with native English speakers (about 20%of the students are ESL students). The program is designed to offer maximum flexibility to busy workers, and students are encouraged to arrange classes with the program's teachers whenever they can come during the day. The reading and writing classes meet for an hour and a half on Monday and Wednesday or Tuesday and Thursday in the afternoons.

The Chrysler Trenton Engine Plant employs approximately 2600 workers. Their average age is about 40, and about 10-15% are not native English speakers. The plant has several initiatives to improve quality and utilize a team approach. One is the Modern Operating Agreement (MOA) which "is a mechanism to encourage joint participation between labor and management in the operations of the plant.... [and involves] training in problem solving, team building, effective meetings, and other interactive training modules."[3] A second is the Product Quality Improvement (PQI) Partnership which "encourages learning new and more effective methods to improve quality, rather than simply practicing one single approach."[4] As workers have become involved in these two initiatives, some have realized that they need to shore up their basic writing, math, and language skills. Others have more personal reasons for wanting to improve their reading and writing.

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[1] UAW-Chrysler Joint Activities Board, Annual Report 1989, p. 14.

[2] Rena Soifer, Martha E. Irwin, Barbara M. Crumrine, Emo Honzaki, Blair K. Simmons, and Deborah L. Young, *The Complete Theory-to-Practice Handbook of Adult Literacy: Curriculum Design and Teaching Approaches* (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1990).

[3] UAW-Chrysler Joint Activities Board, Annual Report 1989, p. 31.

The need for training for the Modern Operating Agreement and for the Product Quality Improvement Partnership has led Chrysler to grant release time for workers to participate in the training associated with those two programs. However, the contract with the UAW-Chrysler EMU Academy calls for workers to utilize classes solely on their own time. Worker participation is discouraged when the three shifts are in ten or twelve hour production days.

Student Characteristics

The vast majority of the learners served by this program are production workers on the line at the engine plant. Their supervisors are generally supportive of workers who want to attend classes. English is a second language for 20% of the learners who attend classes. Their native languages include Spanish, Korean, Arabic, Rumanian, German, and Italian. One third of the low level students in the program are limited English proficient. Native English speakers are not separated from language minority students in classes, and, therefore, classes are multilevel in terms of both skill levels and language background. The ESL literacy students with whom we talked had been in the U.S. for many years and had worked at the plant for 10 or more years. Most could speak English, but few read or wrote much in English before taking the class.

Learners attend the Tech Prep Academy classes on their own time. Most also work ten hours a day at the plant, and many have families with children. Because learners have busy schedules, staff operate the program in a flexible manner, allowing learners to come in for help at any time convenient to them. If a learner misses a scheduled class, he or she is welcome to come to the center at any time possible.

Program Design

The primary goal for Academy ESL students is the reinforcement of personal strengths and improvement of self-concept through a focus on:

- the use of oral language by using provocative and meaningful pictures and print materials
- the transfer of the oral responses into written form
- the reading of the individual print version[5]

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[4] UAW-Chrysler Joint Activities Board, Annual Report 1989, p. 33.

[5] Cordelia Christopher, Program Nomination Form for UAW-Chrysler Tech Prep Academy.

The program is small and serves approximately 20 students at a time (the majority are native English speakers). The contract stipulates that no class will be larger than 10 students, so students get a lot of individual attention. Classes are offered twice a week for an hour and a half. Teachers are also available to meet with students outside of class time, in a tutorial situation, in order to accommodate student schedules.

Although the program is located at a worksite and one must pass through the main plant gates to reach its location, the program is not a workplace program. That is, the reading and writing lessons are not necessarily based on what goes on in the plant or on the workers' particular jobs. However, inevitably some of the topics that students choose to discuss or write about relate to their work lives.

The program offers general reading and writing rather than workplace-specific literacy. There are several reasons for this: First, workers attend on their own time and therefore there are no restrictions on what can be taught (as is sometimes the case in workplace literacy programs sponsored by the employer). Second, as a rule, the learners are interested in using literacy in their lives outside of work, and more general reading and writing skills are thus appropriate. Third, teaching general reading and writing skills responds to the workers' need to be able to document problems that come up on the production line and actions they have taken to remedy those problems. These skills thus are related to the quality improvement steps that the plant is taking.

The Academy model utilizes a whole language framework that emphasizes the use of complete texts, group interaction, and the connection between reading and writing. Academy classes typically follow a sequence of activities: first, learners spend some time reading a text they have chosen during "sustained silent reading." Next they share what they have written during a previous session. Following this, they discuss a relevant topic or interact with a whole text selected by the teacher for both its interest to the student and its potential for helping him/her practice reading strategies. Students interact with one another, using their own experiences as background, and "construct new meanings" about the subject Finally, they write down their thoughts and feelings about the subject for the day.[6]

Instructional Components

Curriculum

The curriculum emphasizes using materials and themes that build on learners' prior knowledge, background information, and experiences related to their culture, life, and work. The curriculum, which comes from a process of continuous collaboration between teachers and students, is developed by teachers, based on students' needs and interests. Neither the company nor the union have direct input into the curriculum.

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[6] See chapter 1 and the summary on p. 46 in Soifer et al., *op. cit.*

The curriculum is built around whole language principles, and indeed whole language provides its driving force. The curriculum emphasizes using content pertinent to learners' lives and is meaning-based. Students are surveyed regarding their goals and interests, and classes are taught toward those goals and interests. Further, the Academy model follows "the principles of interactive learning in which the instructors and learners talk, think, read, write, compute, and learn together using topics based on learners' experiences."[7]

In some sense, the Academy model provides the process and the structure, but the participants fill in what they want to get out of the program.

Approaches and Methods

An essential element of the Academy model is that learners and teachers are co-equals, and both have responsibility for ensuring that learning takes place. The reading teacher goes out of her way to point out to students that they are all teachers (e.g., they are parents, little-league coaches, union representatives, etc.).

Finding materials that will really exert a pull on people is extremely important under the Academy whole language model. To this end, the teacher puts in a lot of preparation time in researching and selecting materials for the class. The stories may be in the form of newspaper articles, other non-fiction sources such as profiles of various working people, or short stories.[8]

The approach in the classroom is to use the stories as teaching tools in the class. First, the reading matter is selected. The teacher usually picks the reading matter for students, based on what she thinks will interest them. In class, the students may read the story silently and/or the story may be read aloud by the teacher as the students follow along silently.

The next step is to get the oral language going by discussing the story or stories. The students guide the direction of the discussions. Common discussion themes that relate to work are the following: overtime, start-up problems, concern for Chrysler's economic health, layoffs, and the new management plan. Sometimes, the teacher writes phrases from the discussion on the board or repeats back to the class what a learner has said. The pedagogical idea is for students to see that their ideas matter.

A writing task follows. Students usually write about something related to the theme of the discussion, or, if they don't want to write about the discussions, they can write about what interests them. If there are only one or two students in the class, the students may select something to read and write about from the small set of books that the program makes available to students. The program secretary types up the stories after the teacher makes the necessary spelling and punctuation changes on copies of the original writing. They are then used as reading material by the students. The teacher discusses each story with its author. In addition, because of the program's emphasis on individualized instruction, students work directly with the teacher on their own real-life tasks such as writing down questions they have for the IRS or writing letters to their children.

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[7] Soifer et al., *op. cit.*

[8] A story about the great Chicago fire in the nineteenth century led to discussions of worker safety and safety codes in the factory.

The whole language model emphasizes cognitive and metacognitive (learning how to learn) skills and is therefore strategy-based rather than skills-based. For example, the students learn to predict the topic of the story by first looking at its title or headline. In addition, they learn to look at pictures in a book or article and read the captions to get an overview of what it will be about. In addition, the program teaches students that strategies are dictated by the materials. For example, re-reading IRS instructions is highly appropriate, and guessing the meaning of a word from its context is a strategy that most readers use. The strategies are taught, modeled, and practiced with the goal that, in the end, the student becomes an independent learner.

Writing strategies follow along similar lines during the three phases of pre-writing, writing, and revision:

- pre-writing
    decide on a subject
    jot down ideas and cluster them into topics
    listen carefully to the discussion in class (if it is a classroom assignment)
    perhaps read a book or article about the subject

- writing
    get the ideas down on paper
    don't worry about spelling or punctuation at this stage
    write the way you talk; keep it simple
    give important information up front
    be exciting, use action verbs, introduce quotes as appropriate

- revision
    re-read what you've written and ask yourself if it makes sense
    ask yourself if anything has been left out
    add, delete, and re-write as necessary
    check the spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure[9]

Although the program does not offer family literacy, the reading teacher encourages learners to do literacy activities with their families. For example, she sends stories and articles home for learners to read to their children. She gave one man a story on Matthew Hansen, the first

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[9] Writing strategies from Cordelia Christopher, "Strategies for Writing" handout, Ypsilanti: Eastern Michigan University.

African-American to go to the North Pole. The student's son was so inspired he wrote an article about Matthew Hansen and sent it back to the teacher for her comments.

We observed one ESL learner in class. The learner was a Korean woman who had worked in the plant for ten or more years; the woman knew how to read and write in Korean. During the previous class, the learner had written a story in English about noise in the factory, including a line that said if we can go to the moon, why can't they reduce noise in a factory. She read this paragraph aloud to the teacher and us at the beginning of class. The teacher then gave her as reading material a profile of a woman who was the only female carpenter in her union.[10] The student read part of the story aloud, and then the teacher finished reading it aloud. Then they discussed how this story related to the student's comments sometime earlier about how it was not necessary to have male and female jobs in the factory. For example, she said, certain jobs required tall people, but it was not necessary that the job be restricted either to men or to women.

Another ESL learner was a woman from Puerto Rico with a sixth grade education. She could speak English, but she read and wrote very little in English before attending classes. She had attended classes for two sessions. When we asked her what was different after taking the Tech Prep Academy classes, she mentioned something that she had not learned directly in class. Before the class, she had had to rely on her children (who were born in America) to help with the banking. After the class, although it was never directly or indirectly taught, she was able to write her own checks and even fill out the paperwork to establish her own account at the credit union.

Initial Assessment and Progress Evaluation

Intake and initial assessment consists of a personal interview with the teacher to discuss the learner's own goals and reasons for taking the class. The learner lists his/her goal for taking the class at the beginning of the session and, at the end of the session, completes two questions asking whether progress was made towards the goal and whether he/she achieved the goal. Typical goals of ESL learners include "to improve my spelling," "to improve my reading and writing," and "to learn more English."

Students complete an evaluation of the program at least once. They rate the teaching and the materials on a 1-5 scale and explain how the program has changed either how they feel about themselves or how they relate to family, job, and community. In addition, they are asked for suggestions for improving the program.

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[10] The student enjoyed reading newspaper articles that the teacher had clipped for her on Asian-American parents and their kids and on military spouses (she herself had married an American soldier). However, a book about an Asian woman who encountered a lot of problems in her life was not a hit. The student would have preferred to read a book about successful European women.

In addition, the model calls for students to fill out a Reading Behavior Questionnaire that provides information about learners' reading interests and habits and the strategies they employ before, during, and after reading. Typically, the questionnaire is given at the beginning and end of a class to measure changes in a learner's perceptions and behaviors.[11] Since the reading teacher found this questionnaire too daunting for the beginning students (including ESL students), she turned it around and abstracted it into a set of one-pagers that established a framework for reading and writing strategies.

Progress evaluation consists of analyzing anecdotal records kept by the teachers, having students assess their own progress based on their goal sheets, and self-assessment of pre- and post-writings by the student. In addition, students keep a log of books they have read and date of completion.

Staff continuously work with students in goal-setting. Individual attention is one of the hallmarks of this program, and small classes make it possible to focus on learners' individual needs and goals. Some students have broad goals (one Arab student wanted to be able to read the Wall Street Journal and a Czech student wanted to spell better so that he could fill out forms) and others have particular goals such as reading a car maintenance manual.

Other Program Components

Community Outreach

Recruiting students for the program presents a substantial challenge for the teachers. They use flyers to announce the beginning of an 8-week session.[12] For a few weeks before classes begin, the two teachers sit near the time-clock in the factory during shift change and talk to potential students about the program. The teachers occasionally make presentations about the reading and writing program to specific groups such as maintenance, training groups, and preparatory apprentice workers. The teachers made a video describing the program and encouraging people to attend classes. This video periodically is played in the cafeteria during mealtimes.

The teachers also sponsor an annual Christmas book fair at which various levels and types of books are available for purchase in the plant. In addition, the teachers give out pencils with the program's name and phone numbers printed on the side.

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[11] Soifer et al., *op. cit.*, p. 179. The Reading Behavior Questionnaire is printed in Appendix B of that book, pp. 187-192.

[12] The reading teacher has found that many non-native English speakers at the plant responded to the word "English" in the class title. Instead of using "Reading and Writing for ESL," she started using "English as a Second Language" to describe the class for language minority workers. In practice, however, ESL workers attend whichever class fits into their schedule, so there is no ESL-specific class.

Needs Assessment

UAW-Chrysler and the Chrysler Trenton Engine Plant hired an outside consulting firm to do a needs assessment prior to inviting EMU to set up a program. The results showed the workers wanted personal enrichment, more than just how to do their jobs.[13] That is, they wanted a program that acknowledged the person as a whole person with a life outside the plant. This perspective is consistent both with the whole language philosophy and with integrating ESL students into the classes with native English speakers.

The program tries to meet the need of some workers to read, write, and calculate better in order to meet the increasingly high-tech demands of industry. The program stays in contact with key plant personnel and work groups in order to gain insight into how they might assist the ongoing peer training for the MOA.

Program Staff

The program's two teachers, who work onsite at the plant, work full time and are paid through Eastern Michigan University, where they are represented by the UAW. At the time of our visit, both the program's supervisor and its current administrator were on the staff of Eastern Michigan University. In addition, there is a secretary who assists with clerical functions.

Staff Development

Staff are provided with a twenty hour training program in Academy philosophy, procedures, and practices prior to beginning to teach. In addition, there is some in-service throughout the year with the Academy's instructors at other sites, regular onsite staff meetings with and without the Academy's director, and a constant sharing of research articles.

Technology

The Appleworks word processing program is used as an extension of the whole language approach. New ESL writers' stories are often pre-typed for them on the computer and saved on their own disk. In this way students can learn the simple computer skills of "saving" their documents, using the spellchecker, and re-reading and printing out their own texts. The Franklin speller/dictionary is also available in class.

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[13] Marvin Moore, Recording Secretary, UAW Local 372.

Barriers

None of the current students gets release time to participate in the reading and writing classes although the company does give release time for people to participate in the Modern Operating Agreement training.

The program is paid for by the local union (as of 1990). When the Chrysler National Training Center asked the local union to pick up the cost of the program, the local union agreed because as the local union president told the program's supervisor, "I've never heard one complaint about this program and that is unusual for any program at this plant."

A native English speaker, who had been a learner at the program, cited workers' lack of time outside of work and lack of release time as significant barriers to attending class. In addition, he reported that some of the workers make fun of learners for taking the basic skills class.

Recruiting ESL students is particularly difficult for a number of reasons: language minority workers often do not want to admit that they don't know much English for fear of jeopardizing their jobs. Many of the ESL students are younger people who have big families and thus finding the extra time for classes is problematic.

Site Visit Conducted June 19 - 20, 1991

Interviewees

Cordelia Christopher — Reading teacher
June Au — Math teacher
Rena Soifer — Program director
Beth Van Voorhees — Program administrator
Al Comons — Educational Training Counselor at the plant
Marvin Moore — Recording Secretary, UAW Local 372

Site Report

El Barrio Popular Education Program

218 East 106 Street
5th Floor
New York, NY 10029

Program Director: Klaudia M. Rivera

> **"An educated citizen is more valuable [to the community]."**
> \- El Barrio teacher

> **At the welfare office, if you say you don't speak English, they hand you something written in Spanish. But if you can't read Spanish, then you still don't know.**
> \- native language literacy student

Number of Literacy Students

Spanish Basic Literacy	20 per year
Total number of students	70 per year

Key Components

- Spanish literacy
- bilingual/biliterate learners as program goal
- combined whole language and Freirean approaches
- strong research and development component
- participatory philosophy
- popular education/Freirean model

Special Features

- shared control by students in program governance
- moving towards community control
- students participate in goal-setting
- students serve as assistant teachers and teachers
- sewing cooperative initiated and run by students
- leadership development training for participants

Funding Sources

- State of New York through Hostos Community College
- The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative (State and City funds)
- Private Foundations
- consortium of unions

Background/Program Context

El Barrio Popular Education Program is a community-based adult education program serving the Puerto Rican and Latino communities of East Harlem. The program is located in the heart of one of the oldest Puerto Rican settlements in the United States. Classes used to meet in a building housing Casita Maria, a well-established community-based organization, located in a public housing complex which is easily accessible by public transportation. Since December of 1991, the Program has been able to rent its own space at 216 E. 106 Street, in what used to be a Catholic school. Most of the participants live in the same community where the program is located and therefore walk to school. Due to the low drop-out rate and high interest in the services the program offers, there is a waiting list of about two years of admissions to enroll in the program.

Somewhat unusually, the genesis of the program in September 1985 originated in a research project of the Language Policy Task Force of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, which is part of the City University of New York (CUNY). During the six years of its existence, the program has grown from two Spanish literacy classes to a complete adult education program that offers classes from initial literacy to GED and college preparation. A learner may enter the program at any level and stay until she secures a high school diploma.

The program was initially funded by a union consortium, and more recent funders have included the Continuing Education Departments at LaGuardia and Hostos Community Colleges, the Aaron Diamond Foundation, the Ms. Foundation, Hunt Alternatives Fund, and Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

A CUNY newsletter article described how the program's philosophy links literacy and empowerment:

> Classes are taught in Spanish, the belief being that one needs to acquire basic skills in one's native tongue before going on to another language. Guided by the teaching philosophy of empowerment, reading and writing become more than just decoding words; they provide means of reading the world. The program's goals are bilingualism and biliteracy and these are achieved through reading, writing and discussion.[1]

Computers are also an integral tool in the learning process at El Barrio which has incorporated computers in its classes from the program's inception. Access to computers was increased during the program's third year by a contribution from Apple Computer of twenty Macintoshes.[2]

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[1] RF CUNY Topics, c. 1990.

[2] Pedro Pedraza, "Language Policy Task Force Retrospective," *Centro Bulletin*, II, no. 6 (summer 1989), New York: Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, CUNY, pp. 60-62.

Role of Research

The strong research ties with the Center for Puerto Rican Studies have become an integral part of the program.

The original research used ethnography to study how members of the community were using literacy in their daily lives. Researchers originally interviewed 25 women and 2 men who wrote their life stories; the goal was to give the stories back to the people.

Researchers from the Center conducted a pilot study of some of the program's participants to ascertain what impact education and literacy have had on their lives. The researchers found that these women had become very involved in their children's schooling and the children had become supportive of their mothers' going to school. Education became an important component of family life. The women also tended to be more assertive in the home and some marital tensions resulted. These experiences and problems were shared with one another in class with a goal towards finding workable solutions.[3] Rosa Torruellas, an anthropologist in educational research who was an early director of the program, found that graduates of the El Barrio program had found a new sense of self-worth and direction, and "self-esteem soars with this program."[4] More recent research draws heavily on "*testimonios*," oral life histories accounts and autobiographical writings of program participants), classroom observations, and ethnographic case studies.

Program Design

The program model offers participants a curriculum that not only meets their educational and linguistic needs but that is also culturally relevant. The program's principal educational goals are to enable program participants to become bilingual and biliterate. Therefore, they offer classes in the native language (Spanish) as well as in English as a Second Language (ESL). Both the Spanish literacy and ESL components employ a curriculum that is "community-based, student-generated, and participatory."[5] The program's view of the socio-political nature of literacy is underscored by research methodologies, problem-posing, and connection to the community.

Additional components of the program design include a leadership project, a sewing cooperative, and a computer component (these will be discussed later in the site report). These additional aspects of the program design work to reinforce the language and literacy skills of the literacy and ESL curricula.

Underlying the goals and methodology is a participatory philosophy. One of the program's unique qualities is that program participants, including those from the beginning literacy class, are involved in all aspects of program planning and implementation including program governance. Students have full voting rights in the two bodies that control the program, the Steering Committee and the Board of Directors. The Steering Committee makes everyday decisions about program planning and policy implementation. The Steering Committee consists of two student representatives per class, the teachers, the counselor, and the program director. It makes decisions on curriculum issues, new projects, policy drafting, and personnel. Students on the Steering Committee, therefore, interview and hire personnel including teachers. Students comprise half of the Board of Directors; the other half are Latino professionals interested in the empowerment of the community.

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[3] "Empowerment Through Popular Education," RF CUNY Topics, c. 1990, pp. 2, 8.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Klaudia Rivera, Program nomination form for El Barrio Popular Education Program.

Some students also work directly for the program. Students are hired as assistant teachers, teachers, and office personnel. The program has the long-range goal of total community control, and, for this reason, learners are involved in all aspects of program planning and implementation. Students are learning to run the program since the hope is that, in a few years, staff members will be phased out and students and former students will replace them. To enable students to participate in all aspects, the program has started a leadership development project.

In terms of language and literacy classes, El Barrio offers initial literacy, post literacy, advanced literacy (pre-GED), GED, and ESL classes.[6] These are divided into three levels of Spanish literacy (levels A, B, and C), two levels of ESL, and a GED class. The program tries to ensure that, before a learner is introduced to the ESL component, she is literate in Spanish. Like other native language literacy programs, El Barrio's intent is that students be able to use all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) when they formally learn a second language.

The program emphasizes the continuing development of native language literacy skills (Spanish) while students are participating in the formal ESL classes. This is initially done through the C Level class which combines advanced Spanish literacy with ESL literacy. At the same time, the program helps the learners to transfer what they know about reading and writing in their native language (Spanish) to their second language (English). The ESL classes strive to provide an environment in which students can develop the oral/aural skills in the second language that will enable them to transfer reading/writing strategies and practices from Spanish to English.

Classes operate on a two semester basis and are held three times a week, two hours for most classes, Monday through Wednesday. The C level class meets for four hours a day. The students spend two hours in a class taught in English by one teacher and two hours in a class taught in Spanish by a second teacher. The two teachers coordinate the syllabus for the course. In the spring of 1991, there were 10 students in the A Level class, 12 in the B Level class, 15 in the C level class and 20 in the GED class. The last week of each semester is devoted to special projects such as students putting their writings together into books. During the summer, the staff and some of the students conduct special research projects such as investigating the teaching of ESL using the contextual approach.

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[6] ESL classes were added in response to requests from the students.

In contrast to an open entry/open exit program, students at El Barrio start classes as a group at the beginning of each semester. Exceptions are made for students who have previously participated in the program. Although new students are not immediately admitted to classes, the program does have orientation and registration throughout the semester. The program wants all new students to understand the philosophy of the program and how it works. The program tries to keep the class groups intact since their emphasis is on collective learning, and the design is for the class to function as a support system for participants. Especially at the beginning levels, the classes tend to plan parties together and have lunch together.

El Barrio represents a native language literacy approach which has bilingualism and biliteracy as a goal. The program requires that students who want to enroll in an ESL class demonstrate a relatively high threshold level of literacy ability in Spanish before receiving ESL instruction. In this approach, students who are not literate in their native language take a series of courses to develop basic literacy skills in the native language before starting the ESL sequence.

This approach to literacy stands in contrast to other models in which ESL and native language classes are taken separately during the same enrollment session, an approach in which ESL classes typically focus on developing students' oral/aural proficiency, while reading and writing abilities are developed in the native language. Other programs offer special bilingual literacy classes, where students develop their reading and writing skills simultaneously in their native language and in English (sometimes referred to as the "concurrent approach" to bilingual education for children).[7] Only at the higher levels of native language literacy instruction does this dual-enrollment occur at El Barrio.

Student Characteristics

The student population at El Barrio is Spanish-speaking Caribbean: 56% Puerto Rican, 29% Dominican Republic. Half of the students come from East Harlem, and half come from the South Bronx. Most of the students are middle-aged women with a number of children; many of the learners emigrated from Puerto Rico as young adults. Although these women have spent most of their lives as homemakers/mothers, they often have also had some experience working, primarily in factories. Because classes take place Mondays through Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., fewer men participate in the program. The program offers classes during the day since most of the students are women with children in school who can attend classes only during public school hours. In May 1991, there were two men in the A level class, all women in B level literacy class, 2 men in the C level class, and a handful of men in the GED class.

Students in the A Level initial Spanish literacy class usually do not know how to read or write, occasionally have never been to school, or, more frequently, attended only a few grades in a rural area of Puerto Rico. Like other native language literacy and ESL literacy programs, El Barrio has discovered that some of their students had tried ESL classes and been forced to drop out because they could not read the textbook.

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[7] Klaudia Rivera, Developing native language literacy in language minority adult learners, ERIC Digest, Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education, 1990.

Instructional Components

Curriculum

The curriculum is community-based, the materials are student-generated, and the program uses participatory methodologies. Combining Freirean-inspired methodology and socio-linguistic research, the curriculum "validates the linguistic and literary practices of the community and uses materials that are generated by the students that document their life stories and struggles."[8] This socio-political orientation to literacy is melded with principles of language learning and literacy development as the program strives to make literacy activities relevant to the adult learners. For example, a student might talk about the factory where she used to work. Aspects of the story might be written down the by the teacher. Later, the story would be read and discussed in class, and other students would be encouraged to add to the story their own experiences from their working life. After further discussion, the story is re-read, and strategies for reading comprehension are discussed by the teacher. The socio-political orientation is well-described by the program director:

> The discussion of the story enables the participants to see their lives under a different light as well as to realize that we share experiences and that reality is collectively constructed. This develops an awareness about social reality and how it affects our individual lives.[9]

Finally, all participants are asked to react to the story in writing. The last exercise has a dual purpose: it generates stories for others to read, and it documents the working experiences of members of the program and the community.

As much as possible, the curriculum tries to make use of the background knowledge of the students by integrating history, math, and geography. For example, in the factory story mentioned above, the teacher might have asked what was made at the factory, whether that product was still made there, and where the factory was.

Like other bilingual programs which are initiated by community-based organizations, El Barrio seeks to promote the maintenance of the cultural identity of a given language minority community of Spanish-speaking Caribbean. They also encourage cultural transmission activities such as documenting life stories from the native culture and writing letters to family members from the home countries, activities that help to build a sense of history and pride in younger generations. These life experiences, in turn, serve as the basis for developing the thematic content of the literacy curriculum.[10]

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[8] Klaudia Rivera, Program nomination form for El Barrio Popular Education Program.

[9] Klaudia Rivera, Program nomination form for El Barrio Popular Education Program.

The curriculum is in flux at any given point in time and is created as part of an ongoing process. The conceptual framework of the community orientation and participatory philosophy is there, and the themes emerge naturally from interactions with the students. For example, the annual picnic is included in every class as learners decide what to bring, make up menus, and decide where to go. Other themes, such as breast cancer, emerge from the daily lives of the participants and affect everyone at the program. Another theme became apparent when Puerto Rico declared Spanish to be its official language.

Themes are discussed at the beginning of the semester in a number of ways. A class might brainstorm together: A teacher might bring in a few keywords and ask the class to free associate. Or he might ask them to bring in a picture or a story. Teachers may ask the counselor if important issues have surfaced. Teachers might also ask the Steering Committee if students are tired of particular subjects. The needs are often so evident that the themes just suggest themselves (e.g., the need for the program to move to a new location).

Community Education

The curriculum also uses participatory methodologies to form a bridge to the community. For example, during our site visit, we saw community education in action in the advanced Spanish/transitional ESL class (Level C). In a unit that lasted about two weeks, students researched the bilingual capability of stores and services in the area. First, the teacher prepared the class by discussing with them what types of stores and services there were in the community and what happened when there was no bilingual staff member. Then the students estimated how many store would have Spanish-speaking staff.

Learners in two-person teams went out to their assigned street neighboring Casita Maria (where El Barrio was located), noted what types of stores were there, and surveyed the shopkeepers to determine what was the dominant language spoken with customers at the store: Spanish only, Spanish most of the time, English only, English most of the time, or both equally.

Back in the classroom, the students used their research findings to develop charts for each street. The charts showed how many drug stores, how many food shops, etc spoke only English or only Spanish. The teacher then made a grid on the board that showed how many of each type of store there were on each street. The students filled in the grid in response to the teacher's questions as he asked, for example, "How many drug stores on 101st?" "5," replied the team who canvassed that street. The next step, which we saw the students doing, was to draw bar charts on graph paper showing, for each street, separate vertical bars for the number of stores that were English-only and Spanish-only. Some of these students could not read or write at all, in any language, three years before we saw them, and here they were acquiring graphical literacy.[11]

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[10] Klaudia Rivera, Developing native language literacy in language minority adult learners, ERIC Digest, Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education, 1990.

The noticing and documenting what stores were in the community, the aggregating of numbers from their charts to the larger grid, and the experience of doing an in-person survey all contributed to the curriculum's link between literacy and the community for these students. By using the community as a context for literacy, the program showed learners how to gather data, analyze them, and interpret information in ways that connected school-based learning with the learners' experience in the community.

Classroom observation

In a post-literacy class (Level B) that we observed, the teacher, who is a published writer, had generated a story about a woman who was sexually harassed on her first day at work by a male supervisor. His story was a composite of two different stories which other El Barrio students had mentioned to him. On the day we visited, the students were reacting to the discussion questions which the teacher had posed. One question which elicited a lot of comment was "What are the options?" One student suggested that the woman could go to the office, but another student responded that, if one did that on the first day of work, one would get fired. After more discussion, the teacher asked each student what she would do and made a list of the options that they mentioned: slap him, just put up with it, go to the office. He said that, if he were in that situation, he would talk to people and get witnesses. But the students told him why that plan would not work: he would not know if the people were trustworthy, he should not leave his machine, and if he were to talk in Spanish, the supervisor might come over and ask what they were talking about.

The class then moved on to a related activity, to write about a personal experience using a similar theme. Suggested vocabulary words included factory, problems, and supervisor. Students took turns reading aloud the instructions for the writing exercise. As the class was working on the writing assignment, the teacher told them that the important thing was to make the words their own, to learn them, and to practice with them.

We made several observations that were similar to those from other native language literacy programs we visited: First, the contrast between how extremely verbal the students were and how haltingly they read was striking. Second, students who were the better readers helped other students when they read aloud. Third, students who had questions about the spellings of particular words wrote them out on scratch paper for each other.

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[11] For a similar lesson in which students do research in the community, see the curriculum module entitled "Co-constructing the Foundations: A Bilingual Curriculum on Housing" in our handbook, *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy.* The curriculum module was co-written by the teacher of the class discussed here (Celestino Cotto Medina) and the current ESL teacher (Deidre Freeman).

Approaches and Methods

The classroom teaching methods reflect the program's biliteracy goal, community literacy orientation, and participatory philosophy. Basically, the cognitive academic base for language and literacy is built up in Spanish and then the transition to English follows. The outcome is "bilingualism and biliteracy, not semi-literacy," says the director.

In part, the program accomplishes this through writing tasks which document the community's oral traditions and are integrated into the program at all the different levels. At the initial literacy level (Level A), the writing tasks result from special curriculum units in which the students might be asked to write down recipes, home remedies, and stories they heard from their families.

The oral traditions of the community have also been documented by university researchers. Researchers from the Center for Puerto Rican Studies have conducted interviews with participants, recorded them, and then analyzed the transcripts. The personal stories of participants are thus documented in the form of books that are given to them. That is, the personal stories ("*testimonios*") of women in the program served as the basis for *Aprender a luchar, luchar es aprender,* a literacy reader used in El Barrio classes. This is an example of how learners contribute to their own and others' education by developing their own learning tools (with assistance from researchers).[12]

At Level B, the program focuses on writing and reading development and generally expanding the literacy skills. The teacher uses question such as "What does it mean?" and "Has something similar happened to you?" to get the students to focus on the meaning of what they read. At Level B, the learners are actively involved in writing and have moved from writing sentences to writing paragraphs and working on self-expression in Spanish.

The students at El Barrio write all the time. They write about love and friendship for Valentine's Day, they read and write poems for Mother's Day, and they sent notes to other classes in the program. They write fiction and non-fiction, and they learn to express themselves in front of other people. Always the emphasis is on building community, to improve oneself within the context of the larger group.

Every year, the staff and students at El Barrio produce an end of the year publication and distribute it among all the students of the program. It is composed of stories in English and

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[12] Rosa M. Torruellas, Rina Benmayor, Anneris Goris, and Ana Juarbe, "Testimonio, identity and Empowerment," *Centro Bulletin*, II, no. 6 (summer 1989), New York: Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, CUNY, pp. 76-86.

Spanish (both fiction and non-fiction) written by students at all levels. The stories are reproduced exactly as written and are not typed. Some have photographs of the author attached; a few have hand-drawn illustrations. The stories from the initial literacy class are often short, six lines of laborious print, and might discuss elections or children. One from an intermediate student discussed the nutritional value of broccoli and tomatoes. An advanced student had typed a little play, complete with dialogue and stage direction. Each student has at least one example of her/his written work represented in this book.

Students at all levels also engage in meaningful writing as they advocate for themselves and the literacy program. For example, when the mayor of New York announced major cuts in the budget for education, the C level ESL teacher integrated the topic into the class by discussing with students how the cuts would affect El Barrio. When students decided that they wanted to protest, he led a discussion of what they wanted their signs to say. One choice was simple but effective: "NEED MORE CLASSES." The students drew posters and wrote banners that they took to a demonstration against these proposed budget cuts. The students also wrote and sent letters to the mayor and to the press. When these students learn to read and write, it is in the context of their community. They learn that literacy is not something practiced in isolation.

Field Trip

The Level C ESL class worked for a week or more on a unit on culture in their community. When we visited, the students were about to embark on a field trip to take Polaroid photographs emblematic of their culture, and we went with them. To prepare for the field trip, the students had discussed in class what culture is all about. They had come up with various examples of culture: singing, antiquity, music, and art. They had then talked about where in the neighborhood they might go to find examples of culture. The finally decided to go to La Marqueta, a traditional market with stalls for individual vendors in a warehouse building. The class had purposely chosen this market rather than the more modern one nearby because they felt that the modern one was ruining the business of the old-style market and its vendors who sold meat, fish, fruit, and vegetables. The class had also voted that, during the field trip, everyone could speak Spanish but that they would write about their findings in English.

This field trip involved cooperative learning and was suitable for the multilevel class. The students chose partners and worked in pairs; one person was to be the photographer and one was to be the recorder. Students who could not write well were careful to choose someone who could write better to be the recorder. Each pair was to take one picture with the camera and to record basic information about the picture (who, what, when, where) on a fact sheet for use in class.

After walking a number of blocks, we arrived at the market and the pairs walked around to look for potential pictures that would exemplify their culture. One pair chose to photograph two smiling butchers; another pair took a picture of the corner of a stall, with a sign in Spanish and cans labelled in Spanish. Others no doubt took pictures of herbs, foods they liked, and the building itself.

Activities that were to follow included writing a group Language Experience Approach story about the whole experience, having each pair talk about and then write about what was in their photograph, developing a display using the photographs for the end-of-year graduation, and discussing aspects of culture and what they meant to the students.

Initial Assessment of Learners

The individual needs assessment process begins at the moment that a potential student calls the program. It starts with the assessment of individual needs and goals for placement in the appropriate class or for referral to another program if El Barrio cannot meet her/his needs.

When the student enters the program, the counselor conducts an initial interview: the counselor and a current student sit down with three or four potential students to talk about goals and what the program does. Each new student is asked to fill out a simple form giving her name and educational background, to answer one of three questions on the form, and to do one reading. If she cannot read or write, the questions are read to her and a staff member fills out the form. The CTBS and the John test, which are mandated by the state, are given after the student has moved beyond the initial literacy level into Level B.

The real problem in placement, according to the program director, is not at the initial literacy level but is deciding if potential students should go into Level B or Level C.

After the student has attended classes for two weeks, the teacher, the counselor, and the student all meet to discuss whether the student is in the right class.

Progress Evaluation

The writing sample from the initial interview goes into a portfolio, and other writing samples are added during that year and subsequent years. Observations by teachers, the counselor, and the director are also part of the evaluation process.

Once the student enrolls in the program, the counselor meets with him/her on an ongoing basis to help the student articulate and set goals and to re-evaluate these goals. In addition, the counselor also meets with groups of students to set collective goals and to evaluate group needs. The teachers and the program director are also involved in this process. At the end of every semester, the staff discusses each student's progress at a meeting.

Promotion decisions for determining when students are ready to move from one level to the next are made in a participatory manner. The promotion decision is made by holding a conference with the teacher of the student's current level, the teacher of the next level, the director, the counselor, and the student. Often this conference is initiated by the student. The group talks about how the student is feeling about her/his work, discusses how the student participates in class, and examines the student's portfolio of writing and observation by others. An individual student is invited to sit in on a Level C class when she is being considered for promotion from Level B to Level C. In addition, students from one level often interview students from another in order to demystify what goes on.

Students have access to their portfolios. They can look at their notebooks and the writing they have on file to see the progress they have made. In general, the program has seen that learners progress in their writing from the very concrete in their first class to a sense of voice in later classes and finally to playing with words when they are truly comfortable with writing.

Students generally stay at Level A for one year to a year and a half depending on age, attendance, and motivation. Someone who is young, motivated, and attends regularly may stay only one year. Many times the student is eager to move on, but not always. The student will visit the next class and participate in the class so she knows what to expect. A rule of thumb is that, when a student is reading and writing sentences, he/she is ready to move on to Level B. This decision acknowledges that, although she may make mistakes, she has clearly made the connection between ideas, oral language, and print.

The program has a number of indicators that it records as showing progress. A learner's self-esteem is affected by acquiring literacy. How a learner talks about herself and how her goals change are documented by the program.

The staff asks each learner to write down changes in their lives as a result of acquiring literacy, and some are quite personal (like altering relationships within the family) and others are more public (like seeing college as a possibility). One learner wrote about a conversation she had had with her elementary age son who brought home a note from school. "What's that?" she said to her son. "It's something that parents are supposed to read. I'll give it to Dad when he gets home since you don't know how to read," said the third-grader. The mother responded, "Your mother does so know how to read and write. Give me that paper." Another learner entered the program wanting only to read and write well enough to help the children with their homework. After completing just the Level A class, she began to talk about maybe going to college some day.

Other Program Components

Community Outreach

A full-time community liaison/counselor is responsible for the program outreach although former students and attending participants are the best recruiters for the program. Due to the low drop-out rate and high interest in the services the program offers, there is a waiting list to enroll in the program. So, outreach for the purpose of attracting more students is not really necessary.

The curriculum, which is community-based and student-generated, links the program to the community. The use of popular education and research methodologies ensures a back and forth relationship between the program and the community. For example, literacy students have investigated housing conditions in the community by documenting the number of abandoned and occupied buildings, drawing graphs with this information, and interviewing community members about the issue.

Two important aspects of the program which facilitate community outreach are that all staff members are bilingual (Spanish/English) and that the program is located in the community.

The program also makes use of the Spanish-language media in New York City. The director was interviewed on a Spanish radio station. As a result, the program got so many inquiries about its classes that the staff could not handle them. As another example, 75 alumni of the program wrote a letter to *Noticias del Mundo*, a local newspaper, decrying proposed cuts in the New York City education budget and saying that El Barrio had played a pivotal role in their lives. As a result, interviewers and photographers from the newspaper did a full-page story on the program.

Needs Assessment of the Community

Community needs assessment takes place at different levels in El Barrio Popular Education Program. The participatory approach to the curriculum in which students go out into the community to research community issues and interview community members puts students in close contact with emerging community issues. The fact that the program is located in and the staff are members of the same community allows the program to view issues in close-up.

In addition, in line with the participatory philosophy, the program learns from the participants what issues are of concern to them. Examples include health issues like the high incidence of AIDS in the community and breast cancer and political issues like proposed cuts in the education budget. The program's strategy is to provide information and education for the students and then to work with them to evaluate the issues and try to devise strategies for action.

The program's involvement in coalition-building with other Latino agencies further helps to identify and to address these issues. On an issue such as welfare reform, the staff works with the coalition to gather research findings and educate themselves about the issue and appropriate action. On other issues, quick action is needed. For example, students and staff joined with other Latino educators to organize and participate in a protest against cuts in the education budget of New York City. Through its affiliation with the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, El Barrio has access to the latest research findings that affect the Latino community.

Personnel

Program staff

El Barrio's teachers are from the community or have experience in teaching in community-based organizations. The two Spanish literacy teachers are both published writers, and their love of language comes through in the classroom. These teachers try to reinforce for the students that they are real writers and readers. At least three of the teachers, all of whom are part-time, have Masters' degrees or are in graduate school. The teachers are paid through Hostos Community College although El Barrio Popular Education Program retains the authority to hire and fire the instructional staff. The positions for the director and counselor are the only full-time positions at El Barrio. All of the staff come from a bilingual tradition.

The teachers all employ an egalitarian style. They tell the learners that they are just like them and that they are there as friends. For example, one teacher shares his pictures of his kids with the students he teaches, and they in turn bring in pictures of their own children. The teachers try not to provide all the answers, and they frequently turn questions back to the students: "What would you do?"

The program has three assistant teachers who are former students or advanced learners.[13] The assistant teachers are trained in the popular education techniques used by the program and, in particular, how to teach people to read. The assistant teachers may co-teach with one of the teachers, work with learners in small groups, or circulate during class and assist students as needed. Basically, the program gives them hands-on experience in a supportive environment. New York does not require certification, which works to the program's advantage since their goal is to promote students to become teachers.

Staff Development

The principal staff development at El Barrio consists of biweekly teacher sharing sessions. There is ongoing collaboration among teachers at El Barrio, and the staff works collectively in staff development activities. The director, teachers, counselor, and some of the students meet every other week to design curriculum and share their experiences in the program.[14] During each session teachers share what they are implementing in their classes, discuss curriculum units, bring examples of student writing, talk about research project their classes are doing, and share the materials they are using. Other staff members give feedback and ideas to the teacher who is presenting. This encourages an ongoing process of reflection and growth.

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[13] One student who is an assistant teacher teaches one day and manages the computer lab on other days.

[14] Because of budgetary concerns, teachers sometimes donate their own time for meetings and staff development activities since the program does not have the resources to pay for their time. Extra time that the teachers might put in for designing crossword puzzles or writing special stories is similarly unpaid. Like other adult basic education part-time teachers, the teachers at El Barrio do not receive benefits or paid holidays and vacation.

The program director also meets individually with teachers to develop curriculum activities or to discuss particulars about curriculum.

Other more general staff development opportunities are available in New York City. Teachers can attend staff development activities offered by the City University of New York and the Literacy Assistance Center of New York City for adult basic education personnel. El Barrio is a member of the Comite de Educacion Basica en Espanol, a coalition that provides adult education services to Spanish-speaking limited English proficient adults in New York City. Staff provides and participates in staff development through this organization. El Barrio staff also present at citywide conferences and workshops.

Support Services

The program considers support services to be one of the strongest (and most needed) components of the program. A full-time counselor/community liaison coordinates and provides support services to the students (see below). Support services are holistic and integrated into all aspects of the program.

Staff advocate for students with city and state agencies, for example, to help students secure the services they need from the Human Resources Administration and the Housing Authority. Staff also help students fill out forms and make appointments with outside agencies.

The program also brings in speakers to talk about topics that affect the community and that were found to be of vital importance. Some of these topics surface through the needs assessment, but the program learns of others more directly. For example, the Level A teacher told us that he makes a point of listening to what the students are talking about before class and during the class break. Through this means, the program learned that one of the students had breast cancer and was undergoing radiation treatment. Recent speakers have addressed such topics as AIDS, battered women, breast cancer, and therapeutic services in Spanish. The program always does some follow-up on issues such as these. For example, class might discuss whether the problem is common in the community and where students might go for information or help.

The affiliation of El Barrio Popular with the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (part of CUNY) means that the program can and does offer students a transition to college education if they so desire. If not, students can be referred to other educational agencies.

Counselor

The counselor is an integral part of the education program at El Barrio. She does intake and initial assessment and explains how the program works. She is part of curriculum and assessment meetings. She works with each learner to identify strengths and set realistic learning goals.

The counselor offers services to the learners by linking them to other agencies providing medical, legal, and social services and by advocating for learners' rights and benefits (and occasionally going with them to the welfare or legal office). This ensures an ongoing relationship with other public and private agencies that serve the community. She provides individual and group counseling, educational guidance, and referral services.

Technology

Computers

El Barrio has 20 Macintosh Plus computers and two Imagewriter printers, all donated by Apple Computer. The staff and students can use MacWrite in Spanish and in English for word processing, as well as MacPaint and Microsoft Works in English.

The program has been collaborating with the Playing to Win center. Playing to Win is an organization that specializes in providing access to computers to those who might otherwise not have access. As part of this collaboration, Playing to Win has trained students and staff to use a computer network. The training with Playing to Win is also focused on how to use computers in an empowering way. El Barrio wants to use the computers for more than having the students type what they wrote in class. They would like the computers to be facilitators of greater use of literacy. For example, students have used the word processing capability on class assignments. A student who sold flowers made a flyer advertising her business. A number of students wrote letters to their families using the computers. The program has observed that students tend to work collaboratively on the computers.

One of the students teaches an introduction to computers class on Mondays that teaches students some of the basics about microcomputers. At this time none of the lowest level literacy students are in the computer class, but one group of post-literacy (Level B) students participate in it. The level C/ESL and GED level students also participate in using the computers. There is some debate about whether or not to wait until students can read before starting them on computers.

Projects

Leadership Development Project

A leadership development project has been added to the program to enable students to participate in the governance of the program and eventually to run the program. The project exposes students to egalitarian leadership styles and encourages the development of the skills and expertise needed to run the program. Students basically self-select for this, for they have to show an interest and be willing to put in the time. About 19 learners take part: the class representatives from the Steering Committee and some of those involved in running the sewing cooperative. They meet four or so times per semester. They work on projects such as drawing up a timeline and writing up a meeting agenda. They work in groups and help each other in line with a collaborative model.

Sewing Cooperative

El Barrio considers one of the most urgent issues in its community to be the lack of adequate employment for its members. Most of the program participants are not able to work because they have small children or because the jobs they are able to get do not provide health insurance and do not pay enough for them to leave public assistance. On the other hand, the program is sometimes unable to offer needed services because of lack of adequate funding or because private funding agencies have a different agenda than the one the program would like to implement.

To address both issues and to contribute to the goal of total community control, in the summer of 1990 the students initiated a sewing cooperative. The students are the teachers, bookkeepers, and coordinators of the co-op. They use contextual-reading by using dress patterns. Most of the women who are involved in this project have worked at different times of their lives in the garment industry doing piece work. Their desire to learn the whole process of dressmaking began to shape this economic initiative. The purpose of this co-op is to provide training, employment, and revenues to program participants while, at the same time, contributing to the economic development of the community.

Sewing classes began meeting in June of 1990 and are exclusively taught by students. One student is in charge of the overall planning of the classes and different students teach the aspects of dressmaking they feel comfortable in sharing. The student who is in charge of the overall planning of the project works closely with the director of the program who during the summer taught an ESL class using the context and language of the sewing business. As part of its economic initiatives, the program was able to secure funds for a "revolving door" fund which will allow them to initiate other cooperatives, such as a food co-op. They believe that economic activities such as these will offer students in the program additional income and a transitional step toward independence from public assistance while at the same time offering them the experience of working in a cooperative.

Site Visit Conducted: May 28-30, 1991

Interviewees

Klaudia Rivera — Director
Alfredo Arango — Teacher for Levels A and B (Spanish literacy)
Celestino Cotto Medina — Teacher for Level C (Spanish literacy) and GED
Tim Walsh — Teacher for ESL
Pedro Pedraza — Researcher from Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, CUNY
Sonia Villegas — Counsellor and teacher of leadership class

Site Report

Project Workplace
Literacy Partners for the Manufacturing Industry in Cook County

Adult Learning Resource Center/The Center
1855 Mt. Prospect Road
Des Plaines, IL 60018

Program Director:
Linda Mrowicki

> **We learned "to complain nicely."**
> - response from learners in a pilot workplace ESL literacy class to queries from other learners

> **Our job is to teach workplace vocabulary, but it's hard when the learners don't even recognize the phrases "first name" and "last name."**
> - Project Workplace teacher

> **Each new word [I learn] makes me feel better.**
> - beginning workplace literacy learner

Number of Literacy Students

Non-native English speakers	436
Native English speakers	199

Key Components

- literacy classes offered at the worksite
- workplace literacy program with a focus on work-related reading and writing
- competency-based curriculum

Special Features

- the project has developed a strong partnership with a manufacturing association.
- cooperative decision-making between management, workers, and program staff is utilized at all levels of the program
- standardized testing is combined with program-based assessment
- the curriculum is customized for each course and site

Funding Sources

- U.S. Department of Education, National Workplace Literacy Program
- Illinois Secretary of State Workplace Literacy Grants

Background/Program Context

Project Workplace Literacy Partners in Chicago is currently funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the National Workplace Literacy Program to provide literacy instruction to workers at their worksites. In addition to teaching literacy to workers, the current federally-funded workplace project has an additional focus on articulating and developing the **literacy audit and curriculum** processes, so they can be replicated.

Project Workplace teaches work-related literacy using a competency-based approach for twenty different manufacturing companies in the Chicago area. The program provides literacy instruction for both native and non-native English speakers who are workers at the company where classes are held. Currently, about 40% of the learners are non-native English speakers. The program emphasizes work-related literacy, but, at the lower levels, also includes life skills, survival literacy, and basic literacy skills. One of the project's objectives for 1991 was to identify basic skills needs common to all participating manufacturers. A perennial challenge for this literacy program, as well as for most other workplace literacy programs with a diverse learner population, is to differentiate ESL barriers from basic skills problems and to determine where math skills fit in.

Project Workplace's competency-based approach has been adapted from that of the Mainstream English Language Training Project (MELT). The focus is on competencies as demonstrated abilities (read, ask — not learn, know) in a workplace context (count number of pieces not count) and involving basic skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening).[1]

There are currently twenty worksites where classes are being offered. Two of the Project Workplace sites which had beginning-level ESL literacy learners were visited for the purposes of this study:

- *Company A*

  Company A is a small company (fewer than 400 employees) in Chicago that makes uniforms for the hospitality industry. It is typical of the apparel industry in terms of the working conditions and the fact that most of the workers are women (92%). The majority of the workers at Company A are not native English speakers; in fact, 17 different nationalities are represented in their workforce. Many have very limited proficiency in English, and occasionally, some of the workers have brought their children to work to translate for them, particularly when they wanted to explain a problem. In general, the supervisors show workers how to do a new job, rather than tell them how to do it. There is a lot of trial and error because many of the workers cannot read memos.

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[1] Linda Mrowicki, *Competency-Based Education: Workplace Literacy*, Des Plaines, IL: Northwest Educational Cooperative, workshop handout.

- *Company B*

Company B with 2000 employees manufactures automotive parts. Company B is a progressive company which offers many benefits to its workers including on-site literacy classes. The company refers to the employees in these literacy classes as having had a "missed opportunity" for education. In general, the ESL learners at Company B have an intermediate English language proficiency but lack the literacy skills to assume the responsibilities of today's changing manufacturing environment (25% of Company B employees are native Spanish speakers), such as problem-solving and working on teams. Company B is placing increasing emphasis on all forms of employee involvement, and one goal of the workplace literacy program is to increase the non-native English speakers ability to participate in continuous improvement activities.

Student Characteristics

Of the 250 ESL students attending Project Workplace classes in 1991, the majority, across all sites, are of Mexican origin (about 80%); the rest are from Central America, Poland, Vietnam, India, and Korea. In general, the lower level learners have spent a number of years in the U.S. Their English oral proficiency ranges from practically none to very good, and most do not have strong literacy skills in any language.

Company A

At Company A, project researchers visited both of the two ESL literacy classes taught by Project Workplace staff.

The "basic class" for low beginning level students has 10 women learners of whom 7 are Korean, 1 is Colombian, 1 is Polish, and 1 is from Hong Kong. Most of these students can read and write in their native language, but they have very little oral or written English. The curriculum includes sight words using vocabulary from the workplace and filling in forms (personal information); they are not yet able to write sentences. The employer would like for these employees to communicate better on personnel matters, and the employees would like to upgrade their English skills.

In addition to Mexican and Korean students, the low intermediate class also has students from Lebanon and Cyprus. These learners have better oral English than those in the low-level class.

They have some problems with forms and they can read and write a little. The class focuses on reading, including workplace terms. The employer's view is that these workers need more English to understand policy and to interact with others. The employees would like to learn more English to facilitate job advancement.

Company B

At Company B, project researchers visited only the low level ESL class taught by Project Workplace although twenty-five workplace literacy classes are planned for the site.

There are 12 students -- 10 men and 2 women -- in the low level class. Four of the twelve students have much lower literacy skills than their oral English ability. They are given special help during the second hour of each class. These students (3 Hispanic men and 1 Greek woman) can recognize letters of the alphabet but cannot read English. When her supervisor suggested that she take the class, the Greek woman, who is near retirement, said that she was too old, but her supervisor told her to try it. Needless to say, she is now happy that she is taking the class.

Company B would like these learners to develop literacy skills for increased job responsibilities and more effective communication at work. The company has both people goals (e.g., the development of their workers goes hand in hand with company success) and business goals (e.g., a better workforce will affect the bottom line). The company wants to develop a world-class workforce, one that is competent, flexible, and able to meet the demands of rapid changes. The employees' goals are broader: they want to use literacy both at work and in their daily lives, such as reading the mail, helping their children with homework, and reading the Bible.

Program Design

The model for the project emphasizes a collaborative effort between management, workers, and program staff at all stages.[2] Major elements of the model include

- a preliminary needs assessment by the staff of Project Workplace, after which an agreement is reached with the company to provide workplace literacy classes.
- a formal needs assessment including an extensive literacy audit and a canvassing of workers' needs and interests.
- development of the curriculum after interviewing relevant company officials and workers, observing jobs on the shop floor, and analyzing written workplace materials
- recruitment and training of teachers
- conducting the program includes
    - recruiting students

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[2] Linda Mrowicki, Monica L. Lynch, & Tess Locsin, *Workplace Literacy Core Curriculum for Beginning ESL Students* (Des Plaines, IL: The Center).

  - assessing students' skills
  - placing students in appropriate classes
  - providing instruction
  - measuring achievement
- program evaluation which is conducted both from the company's viewpoint and from that of Project Workplace.

The project uses a task-based approach for instruction in which literacy (real-life reading and writing) is embedded in a general ESL design. Workers learn how to identify products, to read safety signs and company memos, and how to follow written instructions. Although the program as a whole does not have a special focus on ESL literacy learners, in actuality the workers at a number of the sites fall into the lowest level of ESL learners.

In terms of types of literacy, Project Workplace focuses on

• document literacy	reading for safety, reading and filling out forms, reading paychecks, reading charts and graphs.
• prose literacy	reading policy, procedures, memos, company newsletters

Instruction typically takes place in a classroom-like setting with 6-15 students per class. Classes usually meet for 1.5 - 2 hours, twice per week, for a total of 36 contact hours (although at some locations such as Company A, fewer contact hours are offered).

Company A

Both classes at Company A are offered over the lunch hour from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm in a small conference room. On Monday and Wednesday the lower level students meet, and on Tuesday and Thursday the intermediate level learners have class. Both classes include only 22 contact hours instead of 36 since the company has opted for providing literacy services for more employees rather than having fewer employees take longer classes. Company A has a substantial waiting list for the ESL literacy classes.

Class-time is short and the learners' attention is divided since they must eat lunch during class. These conditions make it a challenge for the teachers to impart a meaningful lesson, and, as a result, the classes are fast-paced and divided into a number of discrete sections. A benefit of having the class during lunchtime is that the students got to know one another by sharing bites of the food that they had brought for lunch. Although Company A is a fairly small company, many of the students had not known the names of the other students before the class.

Company B

Project Workplace classes at Company B began with two pilot classes in one division. Learners were tested before and after two nine-week classes, and they showed measurable improvement.

Based on these results and the needs assessment by Project Workplace, the company decided to go ahead with literacy classes for the other manufacturing divisions.

Project Workplace offers a total of seven classes at Company B: three levels of ESL, one class to transition students from ESL into the reading/writing class, and three reading/writing classes. As at other companies, ground rules have been established for how many workplace classes eligible workers can take: an Advisory Committee decided that workers can take up to three nine-week classes offered by Project Workplace. After that, workers are encouraged to continue their education with classes outside the workplace.

The low-level ESL class at Company B that project researchers observed took place at the beginning of second shift, from 4:00 pm until 6:00 pm, on Tuesday and Thursday. The class met with the teachers in a room adjacent to the company cafeteria.

Instructional Components

Literacy Curriculum

Project Workplace uses a competency-based core curriculum (developed in a previous federally-funded project) that is adapted to meet the specific needs of each workplace. There are seven topics, each referring to a context in which the language is used, around which the core competencies are grouped:[3]

- **Job performance**
  identifying products, describing the production process, following instructions, requesting supplies, filling out a production form
- **Clarification/Verification**
  stating something has not been understood, asking someone to repeat more slowly, repeating to verify understanding
- **Work Schedule/Time Sheet/Paychecks**
  filling out time sheets, reading gross and net pay and deductions on paychecks, responding to request to work a particular schedule
- **Safety**
  reading safety signs, filling out an accident report form, reporting unsafe conditions, communicating emergency situations
- **General Work Related**

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[3] Adapted from Linda Mrowicki, Monica L. Lynch, and Tess Locsin, *Workplace Literacy Core Curriculum for Beginning ESL Students*, Des Plaines, IL: Project Workplace Literacy Partners in Chicago, 1989.

explaining absence in person or on the phone, requesting time off either orally or in writing, reading a job announcement

- **Social Language**
  initiating and responding to greeting and farewells, asking simple questions about family or weekend activities

- **General Company**
  reading a memo, reading a production form, reading a production ticket

The core curriculum not only provides a resource list of competencies but also gives a sample instructional unit for each of the discrete competencies in the seven topic areas. The sample unit gives the name of the competency, a situation in which the competency might be used, materials for the lesson (including company materials), the vocabulary that the lesson works on, the grammatical structures presented, and interchanges (spoken conversation). The same information can also be conveyed via a table that, for each competency, gives the relevant basic skills, vocabulary, grammatical structures, activities, and resources and materials.[4]

A customized curriculum is developed for each course at each worksite, and, therefore, the curriculum reflects the specific jobs and needs of that workplace. The curriculum for a class is developed in the following manner:

- If an employer is very involved in developing a workplace literacy program and consensus can be reached on workplace needs, then the Project Workplace staff generate a competency master list, based on the results of the literacy audit, interviews, and their observations at the workplace.

- Staff then present this list of relevant competencies to managers and supervisors and ask them to prioritize the list using a three-point scale indicating

"critical"	for competencies that all employees in the department should have
"important"	for competencies that are important now or will be in the future
"not important"	for all others Supervisors and Managers are also asked to provide competencies they think are important.

  Supervisors and managers are also asked to provide competencies they think are important.

- From this master list, competencies rated as most useful are incorporated into the course.

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[4] Linda Mrowicki, *Competency-Based Education: Workplace Literacy*, Des Plaines, IL: Northwest Educational Cooperative, workshop handout.

- On the first class day, as is common, the list of competencies that will be taught in the class is shared with learners, and staff solicit their opinions.

As a result, curriculum content at a particular site is determined by a joint decision-making process involving employers (management and supervisors), participating students, the union, and program staff. (At the two selected sites, however, there was no union involvement.) Additional topics may be included in the curriculum since an individual teacher is free to decide whether to incorporate either issues that come up during class or non-work literacy such as how to make a doctor's appointment.

For example, the relevant competencies for sewing machine operators, like those at Company A, that emerge after the literacy audit might include the following:

- greeting co-workers and supervisors
- identifying oneself, company departments, and supervisors.
- requesting sewing materials and supplies
- requesting company forms
- reporting defective tools and machine parts
- reading paychecks (including deductions, net pay, and gross pay) and reporting errors
- reading all the parts of a production ticket (wages depend on this)
- identifying safety problems
- asking for clarification

From this list, several competencies may be selected for a particular workplace literacy course. For example, the course may stress

- identifying oneself and one's supervisors
- naming and requesting sewing materials and supplies (thread, zipper, buttons)
- naming the garments that the company makes
- reading the production ticket specifying the ticket number, number of pieces to be sewn, and the number of minutes the task should take
- asking for clarification including requesting that something be repeated or explained

For each class, the instructor documents the lessons covered and develops company-specific worksheets. The lower the level of English literacy, the greater is the likelihood of a common foundation -- how to provide personal information, learning to use numbers in English, etc. are taught in a life-skills context as well as in a work context.

In the workplace setting, who is paying for the program must be taken into account as curriculum for a particular class is developed. The needs and goals of the company must be balanced with those of the learners.

Company A

Curriculum content differs between the lower and higher level classes. For the beginning class, students have little input in what is taught, largely because of language limitations. In addition, at the lower level there is more of an emphasis on meeting the company's expectations. Since the learners have a number of different native languages, the focus is first on oral English, then later shifts to reading and writing.

The curriculum for the beginning level students at Company A begins with filling out personnel forms and reading environmental print. Most of the learners in the class are sewing machine operators, and they are not required to do a lot of reading on the job. Therefore, the class initially focuses on oral language development using the workplace for content -- requesting supplies, identifying different parts of a garment, naming the different types of garments that the learners sew on the job. Reading and writing follow soon after learning the names of the garments orally. The emphasis is on communication, rather than correct spelling and grammar. In addition, the teacher goes beyond the workplace to link literacy with problem-solving.

At the intermediate level, students can communicate better in English, and they thus have more input into the content of the curriculum. For example, learners may want to learn how to call in sick and how to read a paycheck stub.

Company B

To a greater extent than at Company A, the curriculum content is determined by a joint decision-making process involving Project Workplace staff, supervisors, management, and prospective learners. Large-scale testing (for example, everyone on second shift was tested in reading and math) helps determine what classes would be offered. The test scores remain confidential, and participation in the classes is voluntary. Learners give input on the curriculum on the first day of class when program staff ask them what they want to learn. For example, students may want to improve their speaking, grammar, and reading.

Oral, print, and math competencies comprised the master list from which the specific competencies to be taught were drawn. Examples of each can be seen below in Table Company B.

Table for Company B

ORAL	PRINT	MATH
Report a problem to a supervisor	Read safety signs	Fill out a Statistical Process Control Chart
Participate in meetings	Read memos	Collect numerical data
Analyze what you do not know	Read a move ticket	Read bar graphs
Explain tasks a person did	Keep a log	Use a calculator
Communicate an emergency situation	Fill out scrap cards	Compute numbers on scrap cards

The curriculum for ESL learners in the lowest level class at Company B included such competencies as reading training materials, reading and writing memos, filling out insurance forms, reading a move ticket, and filling out scrap cards.

Approaches

Project Workplace has developed a functional-context, competency-based approach in which language acquisition, rather than formal learning, is emphasized. A whole language approach is used but in a workplace context. Vocabulary, grammar, and language skills are introduced and practiced but the workplace needs drive the selection of linguistic items. Other commonly used learning activities include: role-playing, information-gap, one-on-one instruction (when possible), simulation, TPR, task performance, and journal writing. Learning is measured by demonstrable outcomes.

Activities that have been successful in developing language skills and tying them to the workplace include:

- using actual workplace materials in instruction
- giving out-of-class assignments in which students find information in the workplace and bring it to class
- conducting field-trips/tours around the plant
- using slides of the workplace to establish a context.

Classroom Observation and Teaching Methods

At the beginning of each lesson or segment, the Project Workplace teachers always try to link the topic to the prior experience of the students either in class or outside of class. For example, a teacher may ask the students if they have seen signs around the workplace, or she may ask if the workers remember filling out their insurance forms. Project Workplace teachers have found that, even at the high beginning level, grammar can creep in via learners' questions about present and past tenses and pronouns.

Company A

A typical class might begin with a review of providing personal information for the forms and applications from the company's personnel department. The teacher used a variety of forms, with the exception of medical forms which are too complicated for lower level students.

In order to recognize signs at the workplace (environmental print), the students go on a scavenger hunt in the building to find and to copy safety and other signs that they see. The signs are then put on flashcards and become material for a lesson. Initially, students were confused about the task; they were not sure whether they were supposed to count the number of signs or to copy them. But, after further discussion, they understood the task and enjoyed doing it.

In another segment, the class concentrated on work-related vocabulary building. The teacher selected sight words, and the class practiced using flash cards. In addition, the teacher went beyond the workplace to link literacy with problem-solving by using pictures of signs in the following way: Students were given pictures of signs such as "Parking Permitted 1 hour only," and the teacher asked whether someone could park her car there from 2 to 3pm and from 2 to 4pm.

Sign	Parking Permitted 1 hour only
Teacher's question:	Can you park there from 2 to 4 pm?
Student's answer:	No, time over.

Sign	Restaurant closed for winter
Teacher's question:	Can you eat there in January?
Student's answer:	No.

The workplace content enters class in at least two ways. First, the teacher designs various company-specific materials such as worksheets with drawings of the garments that the company makes and pictures of different materials used in the sewing. Second, in both of the classes, materials from the shop floor are used during class as students improve their oral proficiency: a fabric bundle, thread, button, and spindle.

Because of the need to pack a lot into one hour, the Company A classes are highly interactive. A typical exercise might have the teacher showing a student a picture of a zipper and asking her to "Ask me for that." Similarly, the teachers might bring in some clothes and have students work in pairs to communicate with each other by saying, for example, "Give me the skirt."

Because the students are adults with extremely limited English proficiency, the activities are designed to be as supportive as possible. For example, the teacher does dictation in a particularly non-threatening way: she passes out pieces of paper with blank spaces above correct wording, the students cover part of the page and write what is dictated, and then they remove the cover to check their own sentences. As another example, the teacher uses sentence strips to build language awareness. Yet she does not use sentences she has composed, but she uses instead the actual words that students has written the class before. Again, the emphasis is on meaning rather than on correct form and spelling.

Students keep notebooks containing their work and other class materials. The learners are very proud of their notebooks: for example, the Korean students translate into their language even the practice strip sentences used in class.

At the intermediate level, students can communicate better in English, and they thus have more input into the content of the curriculum. For example, members of a class that researchers observed had wanted to learn how to call in sick, and they had requested some instruction in how to read a paycheck stub.

The pace and style of the classes are affected by the short amount of time for class and the short length of the class cycle. Although the literacy program might prefer leaving more scope for students' original ideas, in practice the learners' responses are more pre-set than original. For the same reason, the classes are controlled and structured largely by the teacher.

Company B

The Company B workers tend to be at a higher level of English proficiency than those from Company A (although one estimate is that the native Spanish speakers speak that language a majority of the time at work and at home). Therefore, a typical class at Company B can have more discussion and more reading than a class at Company A. The teachers try to link each of the topics to the learners' past experience. In addition, even the lowest-level class incorporates general literacy skills such as skimming and scanning and how to use a glossary.

A typical low-level class at Company B might have the following sequence of activities: The first segment of class might begin with the teacher asking if the learners had seen any words at work that they did not know. Then some sort of picture or visual would introduce a topic, and silent reading of a related piece of writing would follow. Words that were new to students would be discussed, and a discussion of what had been read would follow. Some sort of written work to test comprehension would follow, and students would check their own answers.

However, going beyond simply getting the answer, the teacher would engage members of the class in a discussion of how they figured out what the answers were. Explaining in either Spanish or English would be fine, but, if Spanish is used, the student must then repeat it in English. Cooperative tasks in which students would select their own partners might follow at the end of class. A background task might be to write the teacher a letter; the teacher would reply to each student individually.

For example, researchers observed an ESL literacy class whose focus was to be on safety in the workplace. The goal was for the students to be able to read a safety brochure. However, the flexibility allowed individual teachers became apparent when class did not begin directly with the safety topic. Rather, the teacher began the class with "What's new?" and learned that one of the students was interested in transferring from one department to another. The teacher then related some of the questions on the transfer request form to the Personal Information forms they had been working on the previous week. She also used the opportunity to have the class engage in meaningful communication by asking if anyone in the class currently had the job that the learner wanted to apply for. When someone did, she asked what advice he would give the job-seeker. "I already told him," said the second student, "he knows how to do the job." "Tell me," said the teacher, "These are your skills. Better write them down." "What do you think? Can reading help you get a better position?" General murmurs of assent followed.

The class then picked up the topic of safety about which they had done a reading the previous week. First, in response to the teacher's question of what they remember, the students volunteered various safety rules and good practices. The teacher then held up a large illustration of poor safety in the workplace (spilled water on the floor, smoking near flammable material, lifting without bending the knees) and asked the class what safety rules were being broken. At least six safety violations were pointed out by class members. After this discussion which included looking up the word "flammable" in a glossary, the class began skimming a Company B interoffice memo on "Safety Orientation Highlights." The teacher suggested that each person underline words that she/he did not know as they read the memo silently. Then the teacher asked if the learners had seen words that they did not know. One student wanted to know what "environment" meant, and this generated substantial discussion about what an environment is and what are the characteristics of a healthy environment. Other discussion centered around "designated," which lead to a discussion of designated exit, and "interoffice," which lead to talk about interstate and intrastate.

Materials

In terms of selecting materials for the classes, Project Workplace part-time teachers are encouraged to consider what competencies are being taught and what resources from the workplace are available. In addition, the full-time teachers serve as resources for the part-time teachers. It is the experience of the director, that the better the teacher, the less likely it will be that the students want a book since they usually enjoy using materials from the workplace. Conversely, the less skilled the teacher, the better the textbook has to be.

In the lower-level classes that we observed, no textbooks were used in class, but the teachers may have borrowed ideas from different textbooks. Project Workplace has copies of many workplace-oriented textbooks which teachers can consult, but, in general, workplace materials rather than textbooks are used in the ESL literacy classes.

Learner Assessment

For learner assessment, the program combines standardized testing with program-based assessment, a competency checklist, participant feedback, observations of classroom performance and feedback from people on the job.

Placement

The BEST test and the Basic Inventory of Natural Language (BINL) are both used for placement. The BINL typically uses a set of pictures from which the learner chooses five. She/he then describes the pictures until ten oral language samples have been generated and taped. Instead of using the pictures, the ten language samples could be elicited for taping by asking questions such as "Where are you from? Tell me what you do on your job every day. Tell me about this company." The tape is then transcribed and analyzed, with points awarded for using such grammatical structures as complete statements, adjectival phrases, and independent and dependent clauses. The BINL is used to measure overall fluency in a work context. Students are then grouped by needs and proficiency level.

At sites at which both ESL and reading and writing classes are offered, open-ended questions and the fluency of resultant answers help to determine if ESL or ordinary reading and writing improvement classes are appropriate: "What is your job at this company? How long have you worked here? Do you live far from work? What did you do this weekend?"

Progress Evaluation

Standardized Test

Program-based Assessment

Specific course competencies are informally measured at the beginning of the course and formally measured at the end. In addition, the teacher usually keeps track of student progress during the course by noting on a key competency checklist which competencies the student can perform.

To measure overall learner progress, the teacher of a class typically develops a final list of competencies that were taught and designs an achievement test to measure those competencies and evaluate progress. An achievement test for ESL literacy students typically would have both hands-on and oral sections. A pre/post test that is performance-based would be designed around the specific competencies that will be/have been taught. For example, a sewing machine operator might encounter the following in a pre/post test, with several items under each category:

1. A request to state her name, department number, and supervisor's name
2. After being handed a production ticket, a request to point to or identify the following: ticket number, numbers of pieces in the bundle, and pay generated by performing the various tasks.
3. When the examiner displays various sewing materials, a request to name an item as the examiner points to it.
4. When a copy of a paycheck is handed to a student, a request to respond to questions such as what is the gross pay? the net pay? the overtime pay? the deduction for FICA?[5]

A teacher does not typically assess learners in her own course. Rather, another member of the Project Workplace staff actually administers the final achievement test in order to improve reliability. The examiner might, for example, give one point for each correct answer or item identified. Or, the competencies could be rated on a 5-point scale with 0=cannot perform, 2=performs adequately, and 4=performs well.[6] If the same items appear on the pre-test and the achievement test, it is possible to compare pre-course and post-course scores. The learner's performance on the test will indicate whether she/he is ready to move on to a new class or whether she/he could benefit more from repeating the class.

Needs Assessment

Prior to starting classes, staff conduct an exhaustive literacy audit including interviews with managers, supervisors, and workers; job observation task analysis; and analysis of written job-related materials. The steps in the literacy audit include the following:[7]

1. **Interview the contact person** to get profiles of the company and the workforce and to determine procedures for involving management and line supervisors in the literacy audit.

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[5] Linda Mrowicki, *Competency-Based Education: Workplace Literacy*, Des Plaines, IL: Northwest Educational Cooperative, workshop handout.

[6] Linda Mrowicki and Monica Lynch, *Practical Program Evaluation of Workplace Literacy Programs*, Des Plaines, IL: Northwest Educational Cooperative, workshop handout.

[7] Linda Mrowicki and Monica Lynch, *How to Conduct a Literacy Audit*, Des Plaines, IL: Northwest Educational Cooperative, workshop handout.

2. **Design the company-specific literacy audit** to identify people to interview and observe and training to observe.

3. **Tour the site** to get a feel for the working environment (including noise, lighting, what jobs involve), to interview appropriate personnel, and to observe workers and supervisors on the job. When observing each job, the staff details the reading and writing necessary and relates that to the competencies. The competencies include both core literacy skills (that go across industries) and those in a company-specific context.

4. **Prepare a preliminary summary** listing
    a. job tasks
    b. literacy skills required for each job task
    c. potential literacy problems

5. **Discuss the literacy audit with the contact person**

6. **Develop a preliminary work plan** including an assessment instrument and plans for administering it, a curriculum, a schedule for instruction, and a plan for evaluating learners' progress.

7. **Prepare final audit report and final work plan**

The workplace needs assessment, to a greater extent than assessments in other settings, can contain sensitive information. For example, a company may not want its competitors or customers to know that a certain percentage of its workforce could benefit from basic skills training, for fear that the information could be used against them. For similar reasons, employers tend to be very sensitive about releasing information such as how much their scrap rate could be reduced if their employees acquired more English.

In general, Project Workplace has found that members of management have a wider vision than line supervisors. The latter feel the pressure of production and are therefore skeptical of the worth of taking some of their people away from their work so that they can go to class. The former may take a broader view of what is good for the company. Once the decision to have a workplace literacy program has been made, Project Workplace has found that supervisors cooperate with teachers and workers to work out scheduling problems.

Company A

For students at the low beginning level at Company A the employer's stated needs are to be able to communicate personnel matters to workers. Students at that level want to upgrade their skills. The teacher commented that, although her job is to teach workplace vocabulary, it is hard to do that when learners don't even know the meaning of terms such as "first name" and "last name." For the low intermediate level, employers' goals are for workers to learn English to understand company policy and to interact with managers and supervisors. From the employees' perspective, they take classes because they are interested in job advancement.

Company B

At Company B, the Project Workplace staff analyzed the various jobs in a department in two steps. First they enumerated the job tasks involved, and then they broke the tasks down further into three categories: basic skill competency, core literacy skill, and company context. This information then formed the basis for selecting which competencies were appropriate. As we saw in the section on curriculum above, a tentative list of competencies was distributed to supervisors in relevant departments. They were asked to rate each skill as "critical," "important", or "not important." The supervisors input was more than pro forma since it was felt that the program would be successful only if supervisors knew that the literacy program would teach skills that they themselves thought essential.

At Company B, the Project Workplace staff not only talked to managers and supervisors as part of the needs assessment process, they also made a presentation before the plant training steering committee. One of the most telling arguments in favor of the literacy classes was provided by playing the tapes of the BINL samples of anonymous Company B workers at different levels. The members of the committee could then hear directly why classes would be beneficial. The steering committee also set policy on what departments and what employees would have the opportunity to attend the literacy classes.

At Company B the employer explained that "continuous improvement" was their motivation for offering the training:

> All employees need accurate information and effective communication to do a quality job. We need to follow instructions, read procedures and record information. We are expected to make suggestions, solve problems and communicate with our coworkers and supervisors. This training will help us achieve that by improving the skills that are needed on-the-job.

Other Program Components

Outreach

All participants are workers at the company where classes are held. As a workplace program with strong partnerships with manufacturers, the project utilizes a cooperative approach in which managers, co-workers, personnel, and company trainers are involved in recruitment and selection. Project Workplace programs are entirely voluntary. Project staff recruit workers through small worker meetings and one-on-one sessions. In general, the process of outreach works in the following way:

- The company provides a general orientation by announcing that there will be literacy classes.
- This is followed by some sort of individual assessment by Project Workplace staff, which may be department-wide at some sites.
- The last step is confidential one-to-one counseling: Here are your test scores. This is what we recommend. Do you want to take the class?

The "ethos" of the company can be a determining factor in outreach efforts. For example, at Company B, rather than talk about skill deficits among their workers, the company refers to the workers' "missed opportunities" for education. Recently, Company B has upgraded the basic skills requirements of their new hires, and, by offering classes, they intend to bring up the skill levels of current employees to what is now being required of new employees. The Company B emphasis on quality teams means that employees need to problem-solve on the job, to communicate with other shifts in writing, and to report problems to their supervisors.

At another site, a speech and testimonial video by a company worker who had learned to read and write in a workplace literacy program served as an effective tool for recruiting non-literate students. His description of his experience was so moving that burly workers from the shop floor came up and hugged him after his speech.

Program Effectiveness

Employer feedback is obtained after each course, and, in the opinion of the program director, has proven to be constructive and positive. Employers in general report that participants talk more with supervisors and managers and speak up at department meetings. At Company B, supervisors can point to some specific indicators that the ESL literacy classes have been effective. The supervisors report that, after taking the classes, the participants now talk to them more: they have the courage to speak up, and they don't worry so much about making English mistakes when they speak.

In response to researchers' questions about what they've learned in class, participants mentioned a number of work-related topics. However, when learners were asked to contrast their pre- and post-class experiences, learners related their new skills to a broader context. They report that they

- had more confidence in figuring things out
- were no longer afraid to speak English
- could fill out their own forms
- could offer help to others

In addition to anecdotal information, the program gathers information from following sources to measure program effectiveness:

- a comparison of course outcomes to agreed-upon standards
- an end of course evaluation (learner assessment, possibly comparing post-course with pre-course scores)
- a learner feedback form or interview
- a supervisor/contact person feedback form or interview.

The program also counts the number of students who show some degree of success on the end of course test, the number who do not, the number who drop out of class, and the percent of students who are successful.

In addition, the program is externally evaluated by an outside consultant.[8]

Like other literacy providers, Project Workplace finds that it is extremely difficult to measure the impact of their classes. The project director commented that, although an increase in confidence may be evidence of a class's effectiveness, it doesn't give a program much information about whether to offer more classes and what their curriculum should be.

In terms of the success of the overall workplace literacy model, Project Workplace has several other indications that they are on the right track:

- The funding from the Department of Education has been renewed several times, but each specific project has had a different emphasis such as developing the ESL literacy core curriculum or the literacy audit process.

- The program has expanded from serving primarily ESL workers to providing basic skills instruction for native English speakers.

- Project Workplace is now well known and reaching more businesses through recommendations. For example, a company that had recently installed high-tech machinery at their site wanted to communicate better with their mostly-Polish employees. When the company contacted a work-place literacy referral office, they were referred to Project Workplace.

Staffing

Linda Mrowicki, the Director, has an MBA and an MA in TESOL and has been in the ESL literacy field for 10 years. She is the author of a number of ESL literacy textbooks and has provided literacy training/inservice to teachers in a number of states. She also taught a graduate curse in Adult Literacy to students enrolled in the Adult Corporate Institutional Management Program at Loyola University. She establishes the program model and objectives, makes policy decisions, facilitates curriculum and test development, develops proposals, and monitors funding.

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[8] In 1991, the external evaluator was Jorie Philippi.

Project Workplace has a core group of five full-time professional staff: Linda Mrowicki, the director, and one coordinator, Monica Lynch, and three Site Coordinators/Instructors, Douglas Jones, Tess Locsin and Carol Larsen. All either have or are working towards Masters degrees in instructional design, TESOL, adult education, or management.

All of the other teachers are contractors. Some of the teachers teach enough classes for Project Workplace to add up to a full-time position, while other teachers work part-time for Project Workplace and teach in other programs also.

Staff Development

Project Workplace provides staff development at two different levels:

- For the part-time teachers, training consists of orientation to the worksites, development of competency-based lessons, effective teaching techniques for language acquisition, and measurement of learning. In addition, the project pays for preparation time for each class.

- For the full-time professional staff, training is provided in the areas of literacy audits, staff supervision, and technical skills (Statistical Process Control, blueprint reading, and quality training). They are given one-on-one training in how to administer tests such as the BINL.

The project has staff meetings on Fridays, and these provide an occasion for feedback about what training has been useful and what is needed. The program tries to strike a balance between formal training and informal sharing. Other training in which the entire staff takes part include participation in the workplace literacy activities of the annual conference sponsored by the office of the Illinois Secretary of State Literacy Office, the annual conference of the Adult Learning Resource Center division, and other nearby workplace literacy conferences.

Teacher characteristics

When hiring part-time teachers, the director and site coordinator look for a person who

- has experience in the content area
- has a degree in a related field
- exhibits flexibility in terms of being able to work in a positive or not-positive shop floor environment
- has a cooperative attitude. Ideally part-time teachers are independent but good at functioning as a team member too.
- has had some contact with or shows respect for blue collar work. For example, the father of one of the teachers works at an automobile assembly plant.

- balances respect for the workers with an understanding of the employer perspective.
- is open and willing to learn from the project's full-time teachers. For example, a new part-time teacher is typically observed by one of the full-time staff after about two weeks.

The full-time staff is small and has primary responsibility for doing literacy audits at new sites, preparing for the classes, developing the curriculum that the classes will use, and coordinating at the site with students, supervisors, and management. When hiring new full-time staff, the director looks for a person who

- has an advanced degree in a related field
- experience in teaching, particularly in adult literacy
- offers the program something special that no one else on the team has. For example, a reading specialist was recently added to the staff.
- can develop a lesson plan from a workplace competency.

Support Services

Project Workplace staff make referrals to other educational providers for learners in the workplace literacy classes. At the end of a class, for example, student receive counseling to inform them about schools where they could take more classes near work and near their homes.

Perhaps the principal support service available to the adult learners of Project Workplace is the complete or partial release time that companies give to workers while they attend classes.

Company A	The company provides a half-hour release time and the workers contribute their half-hour lunch break for a one hour class twice a week.
Company B	The company provides 100% release time for the two hour classes that meet twice per week.

SITE VISIT CONDUCTED: September 30 - October 2, 1991

INTERVIEWEES:

Project Workplace
Linda Mrowicki -- Project Director
Monica Lynch -- Project Coordinator
Tess Locsin -- Site Coordinator/Instructor
Carol Larsen -- Site Coordinator/Instructor
Doug Jones -- Site Coordinator/Instructor
Devra Jacobson -- Instructor
Laima Schnell -- Instructor

Site Report

Arlington Education and Employment Program

1601 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22209

Director: Inaam Mansoor

> **"We all have a common vision of what ESL teaching should be: dynamic, responsive and educationally sound."**
> - REEP Director

> **"You need English for everything [in the U.S.]"**
> - REEP student

Number of Literacy Students 609

Key Components

- state-of-the-art computer and video technology to enhance ESL and literacy learning
- three major literacy program strands: general ESL (which includes literacy-level classes), workplace literacy, and the Adult Learning Center
- teacher training

Special Features

- creative approach to working with competency-based curricula
- workplace curriculum tied to students' job needs
- program's outreach targets ESL literacy students
- strong retention and promotion rates
- individualized staff development plans

Funding Sources for Literacy-Related Activities

- tuition paid by students
- county funds through local school district
- scholarships subsidized by a county grant
- federal refugee funding
- federal SLIAG funding for amnesty students
- federal workplace literacy grant
- grants for technology from the UPS Foundation and from the Gannett Foundation
- state funding for teacher training

Site Visit

During the site visit, the project team focused primarily on the general ESL strand of literacy and the beginning level of classes within that strand. In addition, we also observed a class at both the workplace literacy and Learning Center components and talked to workplace and Learning Center coordinators and teachers. As a result, this report concentrates on the literacy level classes in the general ESL program but mentions the other two components.

Background/Program Context

The Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) is located in Arlington, an ethnically diverse area of suburban Virginia, several miles from Washington, D.C. REEP is a special project within the department of Vocational, Career, and Adult Education of the Arlington public schools. REEP began offering ESL classes to the community of Arlington county 17 years ago in response to the immigration of many Southeast Asian refugees. In fact, REEP classes began as a 90-day demonstration program in 1975 for 60 refugees who were newly arrived from Viet Nam, and classes have been ongoing ever since. A county-funded study in the late 1970s documented that the local language minority population also needed English, education, and employment services and recommended that REEP be expanded and supported by the county.

A grant from the county enables REEP to charge a modest tuition ($125 for evening students, $155 for daytime classes) to general ESL and Learning Center students and provides scholarships to 350 learners each year who cannot afford the tuition.

REEP participated in all phases of the Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) Project from curriculum development to program standards development in 1983.[1] Three major resources were developed and field tested: competency-based curricula, student performance levels (SPLs), and assessment instruments such as the BEST test. In the second phase, REEP provided technical assistance to programs in the Northeast who wished to implement aspects of MELT. REEP's involvement in the MELT project has influenced many aspects of their ESL program: REEP has selected from among the MELT competencies for their own curricula, they have correlated their class levels to the SPLs, and they use the BEST test for placement. REEP thus links both quantitative and qualitative descriptors of its levels (through the BEST test and the SPLs) in an integrated system of needs assessment, instruction, and progress evaluation.

REEP is proud of its students and the progress they make in language and literacy. They show this pride every day via bulletin boards in the halls. For example, the literacy level students developed a bulletin board of "The Amazing Beautiful Great 26-letter English Alphabet" which featured pictures drawn by the students of words that begin with each letter (the letter A was illustrated with propeller aroplano, artist, and alligator). The more advanced classes had put together bulletin boards on U.S. presidents and "found poems."

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[1] Sponsored by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

REEP's goals for its ESL literacy learners are the following:

> "Consistent with their aptitudes, interest, and education needs, the program will assist Arlington's limited English proficient adults to:
>
> - develop the communication skills (including literacy and spoken language) inherent in the life skills competencies needed to function in the workplace, home, and community.
> - apply social and civic knowledge and critical thinking skills in order to become an empowered citizenry.
> - acquire skills to become independent lifelong learners.
> - develop strategies which foster intergenerational learning.
> - gain an understanding of the increasingly greater role of technology in their lives and learning."[2]

Program Design

REEP has three program components that serve adult ESL literacy learners: general ESL (which includes literacy), workplace literacy, and the Adult Learning Center.

The **general ESL** component is divided into three tracks: A, B, and C. These tracks were created in response to the substantial variability in learners' previous experience with school in their native countries. A Track is for learners who have had five or fewer years of education in their own countries and is divided into four proficiency levels, all correlated to the MELT Student Performance Levels (SPL). Literacy students (A Track) can move up to tracks B and C and develop their academic skills within the program, but on average they stay in A Track for about three cycles. However, the program has found that literacy students who move up into B Track have a more difficult time than those that test into it because the literacy students have had less experience with schooling.

B Track is designed for students who have had more than five years of education in their native countries; students on average stay in B Track for two cycles. Like A Track, the B Track have four proficiency levels of curricula. C Track is for academically bound students.

REEP uses a modified open entry/open exit system. The general ESL classes have start times at varying locations that are staggered by five or six weeks, so most new learners do not have to wait very long before beginning classes. ESL classes are offered Monday through Friday during the mornings and Monday through Thursday in the evenings. There is no significant demand for afternoon classes. Daytime students attend classes for 3 hours a day, 5 days a week. Evening students attend classes for 2.5 hours, four days a week. Sessions last 12 weeks. Classes are offered at five different locations in neighborhoods where LEP adults live. The main REEP campus is Wilson School in Arlington.

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[2] From *REEP Policies*, Arlington, VA: REEP, July 1991.

REEP offers three A Track classes - one in the daytime, two in the evening. The evening class has a majority of Spanish speakers; the daytime class is mixed. In a given quarter, 55 - 60 students are enrolled in A Track and about 375 in B Track and C Track combined. Each year, the REEP general ESL and Learning Center components serve about 1100 adult learners.

REEP funds its general ESL classes through a contract with Arlington County, and they receive federal money to provide educational and employment-related services for refugees and newly legalized immigrants. Students not covered by REEP's grants pay tuition or get scholarships.

The **workplace literacy program** is offered in partnership with the Arlington and Alexandria schools, Arlington and Alexandria Chambers of Commerce, and fourteen local hotels. REEP conducts a literacy analysis for the hotels' housekeeping and food and beverage departments where the majority of limited English speakers work. REEP staff then design an appropriate curriculum and teach the workplace literacy classes, which are held on-site at the workplace. Workers who attend classes either do so on company time or receive a cash bonus from their employers for attending classes.

The **Adult Learning Center** offers state of the art computer and video technology to enhance ESL and literacy learning. At the time of our visit, the Learning Center had 13 computers of different types, as well as other equipment such as the Franklin Spanish-English electronic dictionary, language cards, cassette recorders, videos, and print materials. The Learning Center, which was set up 2 1/2 years before our visit, uses primarily educational software aimed at teaching or practicing aspects of learning English (grammar, vocabulary, spelling), plus general software such as easy word processors and content software such as P.C. Globe and Consumers and the Law. The Learning Center has been instrumental in introducing more reading, writing, and listening into the curriculum since the classrooms had traditionally focused more on oral proficiency.

The Learning Center is staffed by a team of 15 trained ESL teachers who also teach in the general ESL and/or workplace literacy program. Instructors assist students in selecting software and other instructional materials and monitor their progress. Most students use the Learning Center on a self-access basis and work at their own pace. This is accomplished through individual learning plans which incorporate an assessment of the learner's language skills, her/his learning goals, and the selection of appropriate materials.

The daytime ESL classes rotate through the Learning Center for eight consecutive days per cycle to do intensive computer work. The evening C1 class uses the Center three hours per week. Teachers incorporate the use of computer software into their classes, often having students create their own learning materials such as LEA stories.[3] In addition to the regular rotation of classes through the Learning Center, additional instructional time at the Learning Center can be purchased by tuition/scholarship students. The advanced intermediate classes (B3 and B4) use the Learning Center for process writing at spaced intervals during the cycle. Other B track classes have used the Learning Center facilities to make videos that are then shared with other classes.

The Learning Center is open on a drop-in basis from noon until 8:00 pm Monday - Friday, and from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm on Saturdays, allowing educational access to language minority adults whose schedules prohibit them from attending regularly scheduled classes. It offers limited English speakers individualized self-paced instruction which is especially useful for these learners. The students who use the Learning Center on their own tend to be higher level students (not literacy students). REEP does not recommend that literacy students use the lab without being enrolled in a class. Workplace literacy students also can access a variety of materials pertinent to the workplace curricula.

The Adult Learning Center also provides the Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP) designed by U.S. Basics. The Learning Center is part of a national network of sites using CCP. CCP has two tracks, a functional, life-skills curriculum that reflects many of the REEP competencies and an academic track that focuses on language art skills. A citizenship curriculum appropriate for intermediate or advanced students is also available. Intermediate students who are not enrolled in other classes work their way through one or a combination of the two CCP tracks.

Student Characteristics

REEP's general ESL program serves a mixed population of immigrants who live in Arlington County, Virginia. The largest group of students comes from El Salvador (56%), but REEP also has many students from Vietnam, Guatemala, Ethiopia, and other countries. Students are almost evenly split between men and women. In general, the students tend to be young, single, or married with just one or two children.

The A Track students range from those with no literacy in their native language to students who read and write a minimal amount in their native languages. The beginning students in A Track typically have less than five years of education in their native countries. In 1991, there were about 120 learners in A Track and about 50 of them were known to have been to school for four or fewer years. Over time, there has been a decline in the A Track population because the Arlington population has changed since much of the low rent housing has been converted to condominiums.

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[3] REEP provided staff development in how to use computers and time for experimentation for the teachers.

Instructional Components

ESL Curriculum

The curricula for tracks A and B are based on the life skills competencies defined by the Mainstream English Language Training Project (MELT). There are four levels corresponding to A Track and four levels for B Track, each correlated to a MELT Student Performance Level (SPL) through BEST test ranges. Each level consists of 9-11 instructional units (i.e., topics), each requiring 12-15 hours of instruction. For every topic, the curriculum lists performance objectives (life skills tasks) to be performed and language functions with corresponding grammatical structures and vocabulary needed to perform these tasks. "Each level of the curricula has a reading component with cultural notes associated with the topics and competencies covered."[4] In addition to the performance objectives for each level, REEP provides teachers with a list of suggested resources and appropriate tapes and videos. Teachers have access to a resource center complete with class sites of commonly used texts, videos, and audiotapes. REEP also maintains a laminated poster file and boxes of realia that teachers can access whenever they want.

For each track, there are required core competencies, but teachers are trained to select other competencies in line with student interests. Teachers might use the progress evaluation form at the beginning of a cycle to find out what topics should be included and excluded during the term. All teachers are encouraged to learn techniques for accommodating multilevel classrooms and to draw language from students at their own rate. For example, one teacher has developed self-accessing kits each with objects such as crayons, a teddy bear, or a can opener. A sample activity would require students to find an object they don't recognize, take it out, and tell the class what they think it is useful for.

When immigration reform was passed, REEP discovered that the population eligible for amnesty under the IRCA legislation needed survival English because they had, by and large, lived in insular communities and spoke a pidginized English, if any at all. REEP added a civics and American history component to all of their ESL classes so that all students could benefit. REEP focused the civics curriculum on holidays, community, growth of the U.S., and government. They found that this content fit in well with field trips in the Washington area. Thus the ESL classes enabled students to complete their amnesty education requirements in history and English.

A Track and Introducing Print

When introducing print, REEP's philosophy is to start with what the learners already know and then to show the students that they already know a lot. For example, beginning students might take a tour around the school and its neighborhood. They already know some language: EXIT, 7-11, STOP. During the tour, students make a list of the words that they know. To increase language awareness, teachers encourage all but the very beginning students to keep a notebook of language questions they have (e.g., the difference between close and clothes).

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[4] REEP program nomination.

Print is also introduced to non-literate students in A Track through the use of Language Experience Approach (LEA) stories. Oral preparation for a topical unit sometimes precedes work on theme-based LEA stories (after appropriate vocabulary has been studied). For example, students may begin by naming characters in a visual cue or by sequencing pictures that have been cut out, with the teacher writing up the resultant story. Themes that have been successful include what learners would like to tell their mothers on Mother's Day, games people played as children, and life before they arrived in the U.S. In addition, students might complete a map of the area near the school, practice using a Metro card in a simulated ticket machine, or learn the names of the ethnic foods favored by their classmates.

B Track

At the higher literacy levels of the B track, the curriculum is moving away from competencies towards a more functional approach. REEP revised the curriculum based on a formal needs assessment of the learners and how students said they were using language and needed to be able to use language. The B track is also moving towards formalizing the learners' objectives with regard to reading and writing skills.

Adult Learning Center Curricula

The Learning Center offers students the opportunity to study English and literacy independently, to supplement classroom activities, and to brush up on particular skills. For the first category of learner, the Learning Center uses CCP by U.S. Basics as its main curriculum. As we saw above, CCP itself offers two tracks, a functional, life-skills track and an academic track. In addition, the Learning Center has a citizenship curriculum, workplace literacy materials, and a skills-based curriculum appropriate for intermediate or advanced students who want to work on specific English skills such as pronunciation or writing.

The center has a variety of other software students can use to brush up on particular language skill areas. For example, advanced students might use word processing software for a class assignment to write a story about their job in the past, present, and future. Students often work in pairs at the computers: the staff make efforts to pair students from different countries so they have to communicate in English.

Currently, the center staff are annotating a Learning Center supplement linking literacy-level Learning Center activities to the curricula for the A and B ESL tracks. Eventually, REEP would like to have a computer in every classroom and have teachers learn to use them for classroom instruction.

Workplace Literacy Curricula

REEP has written two workplace curricula: *ESL for Hotel Food and Beverage Workers Curriculum* and *ESL for Hotel Housekeepers Curriculum*. Both use a competency-based approach and are correlated to the MELT SPLs. The job tasks and language requirements necessary to complete the tasks form the basis of each curriculum. Supervisors, teachers, and students have some input in selecting priorities for instruction within these curricula.

Approaches and Methods

REEP uses a competency-based, life-skills approach in all of its teaching. They encourage teachers to use an approach that integrates reading, writing, speaking, and listening. REEP also encourages teachers to abide by the following principles. Instruction should:

- be relevant to the students' lives/needs/goals
- be challenging but not frustrating
- enable the student to use several language skills
- enhance the students' abilities to work with others to accomplish a task
- be product or task oriented
- allow the teacher to be a facilitator of learning[5]

Student-generated materials are valued at REEP and used for reading, writing, and discussion. In the normal course of class, students may generate their own learning materials such as dialogue journals, student newsletters, letters to Congress, and letters to children whose classroom they may be sharing. Classes which use the Learning Center often produce materials which can be shared with the Learning Center and other REEP classes. Publications produced have included a cookbook, a magazine, and collections of LEA stories, some of which have included illustrations.

For the lowest proficiency level students, REEP teachers have found a number of activities that work well. LEA stories are appropriate for classes that contain non-literate learners. Cutting out pictures from magazines illustrating "I like/I don't like" and introducing themselves to one another also don't require much fluency or literacy. On the spot information gap activities allow students to move around the room, talk with their fellow learners, and test their oral English: find someone who ... wears black socks or is from El Salvador. A particularly fun activity was to hold a taste test of instant puddings. The more advanced students helped one another read the directions with assistance from the teacher. After the puddings were made, the taste test proceeded with the ratings from each student recorded on a grid. At the end of the class, it was clear that butterscotch would never be a winner with this crowd!

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[5] REEP program nomination.

Like most other adult ESL literacy programs, REEP finds that their classes are multilevel. Teachers are encouraged to use group work or peer activities to make use of the varying levels of proficiency of the students. For example, students in a group may create dialogues, or pairs of students might map the adjoining neighborhood by identifying stores, traffic signs, and street names. Trips to the nearby grocery store to complete an activity given to the students by the teacher is another form of group activity. REEP finds that peer teaching goes on all the time. Students who finish an activity early are encouraged to help others.

REEP teachers have a number of strategies for incorporating student needs into the classroom. For example, one teacher uses magazine pictures as open-ended conversation devices. Even the low-level student can express themselves with a few words (e.g., "boss bad" to describe an angry looking man). Another teacher emphasized that creating an environment that was respectful was important. When learners are drawing a picture of their favorite meal, the teacher can draw hers too. During silent reading, the teacher reads too.

In the workplace literacy component, the teacher talks with the supervisors to determine what they expect and want. But she also tells them that everyone's needs must be taken into account. She tries to get the students to talk about what they want to learn to try to get them hooked into how English can work for them. She solicits specific incidents from management and supervisors for when English should have been used and uses them for problem solving activities.

Needs Assessment

REEP staff monitor information about the literacy levels of learners, as well as information about their educational and ethnic backgrounds, progress through the program, and additional program needs.

Once per year, the REEP staff does an informational needs assessment with their current students to find out what information they need. For example, such topics as AIDS, immigration, and family reunification came up during a recent needs assessment. In response to information needs on AIDS, REEP arranged special AIDS-awareness workshops for students; the sessions were held in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. REEP followed them up with classroom discussions.

REEP uses several approaches to needs assessment. Consider traditional written questionnaires to be too challenging for low level literacy students. They have found that two techniques that have been quite successful at all levels are mind-mapping and information grids. Mind-mapping gets at the contexts for various literacy activities. For example, students might be asked where they would like to use writing or reading. The teacher would put the key word ("writing") in the center of a circle and would fill in locations where writing is needed or types of writing that are needed as the class brainstorms and volunteers what they are thinking. Information grids are familiar to both teachers and learners since they are frequently used in REEP's classes. As part of needs assessment, students might walk around and interview one another and ask the number of years a person had been in the U.S., whether she/he has a job, where they would like to be able to use English at work, and where they would like to be able to use English outside of work.

REEP also monitors information about local demographics. For example, REEP noticed that while only about 20% of their students were parents, the number of language minority children enrolled in South Arlington schools had grown considerably. REEP then held an open meeting with the parents of the school children and found that they were not attending English classes for several reasons: classes were held too far away from where they lived, child care was not available, and four days per week of class was too much. REEP then did a needs assessment in Spanish and English over the phone. In response to the information they gathered, REEP has started family literacy classes that will meet two nights per week and provide child care. As a second example, REEP's workplace literacy program grew out of communication with the Arlington Chamber of Commerce and research revealing the need at local hotels to employ non-native workers who were having difficulty communicating on the job.

Every two to three years, REEP does a program-wide needs assessment. In 1985, they used bilingual translators who worked with small groups. But they found that the translators reported what they thought students needed, rather than what students had said. In 1990, assessment techniques included information grids, mind-mapping, oral interviews, and, for higher proficiency level students, written questionnaires.

The needs assessment associated with the workplace literacy project is a traditional literacy analysis. The REEP staff asks representatives of the business which employee group needs literacy instruction. Next, they interview expert employees and supervisors to learn what employees need to read and write, as well as where and when they need to communicate. If possible, they observe the jobs so they can see language needs that might not have been mentioned. Finally, supervisors and the potential students are asked to help set priorities. In designing curriculum, REEP tries to link everyday needs to workplace needs. For example, a worker might need to be able to relate going to the doctor to her absence from work when she explains her absence to the supervisor.

Intake and Initial Placement

REEP has established BEST test score ranges for each of its instructional components within the ESL tracks and relies on these to facilitate placement. Potential students for A Track or B Track in the general ESL classes are tested three weeks before class is scheduled to begin in order to determine in which track they should be placed for successful learning. As many as 50 people may take the test at one time. Oral interviews are done by appropriate bilingual staff, and placement is made partly on the basis of the oral BEST test. Placement also takes into account how long the learner has been in the U.S. and his/her age and level of education. The third factor that goes into the placement decision is the result of the learner's written "track test," which is a REEP-developed assessment tool. The A-Track test involves about 30 items such as circling the right number to correspond to the number of dots, circling the word that is the same as the given word, circling the word for the piece of clothing that is pictured, circling the words that represent the amount of money shown, answering questions about a four-line story, and circling the words that go with a picture.

REEP strives for inter-rater reliability in the initial assessment process by providing testers with training in how to administer the BEST test and instruction in the general achievement criteria that correspond to each of the class levels. Periodically, trainers test in pairs to assure consistency in rating.

For the general ESL program, the intake interview does not establish the extent of native language literacy but includes years of education. In contrast, the workplace literacy program does ask learners to write a few sentences about their jobs in English or in their native language.

Progress Evaluation

Teachers typically determine the extent of native language literacy during informal assessment once the learner enters the classroom. During the first few days of a cycle, teachers do activities (e.g., mind-mapping) to try to determine the goals of the students. During this time, teachers also have the opportunity to assess a learner's English and literacy proficiency in order to decide if a learner was placed correctly and recommend a transfer, if appropriate.

REEP bases its progress evaluation on the performance objectives specified in the REEP curriculum. Assessing a student's progress in using language is intended to reflect the speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills needed to perform life skills. Performance is evaluated on an ongoing basis and recorded on the student's individual achievement plan. Teachers meet with students twice a term, at six and twelve weeks, to discuss their progress. At the end of the term, teachers recommend promotion or retention based upon whether the student has mastered the key competencies associated with her/his level and whether the use of language approximates the exit level SPL description. Teachers can also have the student retested.

Assessment in the workplace literacy program has many of the same features as assessment for the general ESL classes. REEP uses the BEST test and writing and math samples for initial assessment for the workplace literacy program. For progress evaluation, the program does pre- and post-testing with the BEST test, and they use supervisors' evaluations, student self-evaluations, and individual progress reports.

For initial assessment, Learning Center students who have not been assessed for the general ESL or workplace literacy classes take the BEST test and literacy and reading/writing tests developed by REEP. Progress testing depends on which segment of the Learning Center resources the student uses. Learners using the REEP-designed skills-based curriculum are given a test designed for that curriculum and their progress is documented on specially-designed work schedules whenever they use the Learning Center. Student who use the Comprehensive Competencies Program designed by U.S. Basics take progress tests associated with that program after every 50 hours of instruction.

REEP uses the CASAS test to validate their levels after first establishing by testing that the ranges of SPLs associated with CASAS scores fell into the ranges that CASAS anticipated. They do not use CASAS for placement or progress evaluation.

We asked some of the REEP teachers what were the benchmarks they saw as indicating that students were learning and here are some of the responses:

- teachers hear chatter in the classroom instead of silence
- students independently ask each other questions
- people from whom you had to elicit a few words now offer remarks in class
- students show they're in control by putting the proper date on the board before class

Other Program Components

Community Outreach

REEP undertakes a number of community outreach efforts perhaps the most innovative of which is a video they made. This video, which was presented at a booth at the Arlington County Fair, features students and teachers from the school. The video shows various people stepping in front of the camera and saying in their native language, "My name is ___________, and I am from __________." They continue in English "I study English at the Wilson School. Follow me to the Wilson School." A technique such as this is clearly appropriate for reaching non-literate potential learners.

In addition, REEP uses a variety of outreach methods. Bilingual staff members, including but not limited to teachers and coordinators, have been invited by some of the area churches to address people who said they wanted to know more about taking ESL. However, like many other programs, REEP has found that the majority of their students have heard about the program from family and friends: a recent survey revealed that word of mouth was the way 85% of their current students found out about REEP. Word of mouth, of course, is both culturally appropriate and useful for reaching non-literate students.

They employ "targeted outreach" that focuses outreach efforts toward a specific group, such as newly legalized aliens, workers at a particular company, or students who have skipped a cycle or withdrawn early. Occasionally, teachers will call students who are not coming to class. The outreach materials such as bilingual flyers, announcements, and incentives to participate are targeted to the selected group.

REEP has used other special promotions such as the "learning partnership program" conducted with U.S. Basics, in which they gave cash rebates to students who completed a certain amount of time in the learning lab.

Another successful approach is monthly "visitors' days" when anyone from the community can observe a class and "bring-a-friend days" when students have the opportunity to bring a guest to class.

REEP also employs a variety of written materials. REEP sends out a number of flyers announcing the beginning of classes; staff brainstorm with the students on where the flyers should go. REEP puts up tear-off signs in the community on bulletin boards, at libraries, in ethnic stores and restaurants, and laundromats. REEP prints simple maps of program sites, and authors articles and publishes their start dates in foreign language publications.

To reach parents of local school children, REEP makes presentations at local schools, arranged by each school's ESOL coordinator. The Arlington Cable Access station has also featured REEP's services.

Staffing

REEP prefers to hire teachers with Master's degrees and at least one year of teaching experience. The minimum standards are a BA degree in ESL or a related field and a year of teaching. REEP looks for teachers who are comfortable working within a structured environment yet can draw out from students what they need. Teachers should show flexibility within a competency-based curriculum framework by incorporating these needs and creatively using print, visuals, and manipulables in their teaching. Teachers must also possess cultural sensitivity with respect to the multi-ethnic REEP learners and understanding of the students as adults with a wealth of knowledge and experience. Teachers typically may teach in A Track for two cycles and then in B Track classes during the next, or they may move over to the workplace literacy program.

Although 95% of the teaching staff is part time, REEP is able to offer benefits such as sick leave, paid holidays, and vacation. Those who work more than twenty hours per week also are eligible for health insurance. The REEP director develops combination positions, so that staff will be more fully employed and eligible for health insurance benefits.

REEP uses a wide variety of volunteers and has a volunteer coordinator. Approximately 40 volunteers work as teachers' aides, function as one-to-one tutors, assist in the Adult Learning Center, and fill other roles such as simulating job interview for students. Prospective Peace Corps volunteers and college students can fulfill teaching internship requirements by volunteering at REEP. Some former students work in the Learning Center because, as they say, they want "to help other immigrants." Two companies, the Body Shop and Hyatt Hotels, provide staff as volunteers as part of their corporate commitment to volunteerism.

Volunteers are given an information packet and go through a 1.5 hour training session that is an orientation to the program. Subsequently, the volunteers have access to a number of different training modules on relevant subjects such as computer-assisted instruction, listening, reading, conversation facilitation, Language Experience Approach (LEA), and Total Physical Response (TPR). REEP tries to match teacher and volunteer interests. Volunteers are invited to the in-services for teachers, and many go on to become substitute teachers for the program. As an example of a role that a volunteer might fill, an A Track teacher might use a native Spanish-speaking volunteer as the person to whom a beginning student can read aloud.

Staff Development

Just as the students are multilevel, so too are the teachers, with some having much more experience than others. REEP accommodates these differences by providing tailored staff development. Every teacher submits an individualized in-service plan. Teachers are paid for one 3-hour in-service per teaching cycle during the year. For the past two years, teachers have chosen what they want to attend or do in addition to the mandatory one or two in-services. For example, teachers might use some of their in-service to attend TESOL meetings or other local professional development seminars. Another option is for teachers to conduct action research in their classes (see below). The mandatory in-services focus on topics of interest identified by the instructional staff. Last year, topics included exploring literacy through all levels of the curriculum and learning how to use the resources that REEP has, such as designing instruction around educational technologies. In general, the REEP director, coordinators or more experienced teachers conduct the training.

Teachers get feedback on their teaching during the year. The ESL coordinator visits classes of new teachers, twice in the first cycle and at least once in the second cycle. All teachers are observed and evaluated once each year. All teachers are observed and eval once each year. During a pre-meeting with the coordinator, the teacher and the coordinator decide together what the focus of the observation will be. In addition, substitute teachers are provided for those who want to observe someone else's class.

In addition, REEP provides training for new teachers and experienced teachers. REEP provides pre-service training for new teachers that includes a 3-hour orientation, course and level-specific information, and a visit to at least one class. New teachers also attend a learner assessment workshop on how to evaluate students. Achievement of competencies and progress in English. REEP also provides two "Super Trainings" on the latest topics of interest to the staff.

REEP provides staff development outside of its own organization through a cluster training grant from the State of Virginia. A number of REEP's teachers are certified state staff developers and provide staff development to ABE/ESL teachers in 6 Northern Virginia counties. The trainers use the ESL Teacher Institute (ETI) model from California, and REEP has developed four modules (computer-assisted instruction, workplace literacy, learner evaluation, and process writing) to add to the ten ETI modules in basic ESL techniques. All REEP teachers have access to this set of basic ESL techniques modules that include topics such as dialogue and drills role play, information gap, life skills reading, and cooperative learning. Earlier, during the MELT project, REEP helped write and field test a training manual for trainers working with refugee programs wishing to use the MELT resources.

Action Research

REEP provides opportunities for staff to write "mini-proposals" for ideas they would like to try out in their classes. REEP gives 3-6 hours of in-service credit toward a "mini-grant" for individual research or materials development projects that are approved in advance by the director. As a result, some teachers do action research as a form of staff development. Through George Mason University, ESL teachers can get three graduate level credits for their classroom action research.

Action research involves teachers studying what goes on in their own classroom. Specifically, they formulate a question, alter their practice to test the question, and document the effects of this alteration over time. Topics at REEP have included self-access civics in the multilevel literacy ESL classroom, closed-caption television and ESL literacy learners, and the development of language experience stories for use as reading texts by adult ESL learners.

Support Services

REEP's support services include referrals by a multilingual staff to child care services, jobs, and skill training, as well as informal help with such matters as understanding bills, making appointments, etc.

Community organizations regularly make presentations to REEP classes. REEP also maintains materials from community service organizations advertising their services. Topics that have been addressed in the presentations include: immigration, AIDS, police, housing, health, nutrition, banking, legalization, etc. As indicated above, the students are polled at least once per year to plan for such information sessions.

Arlington County has a well-integrated refugee system whose central agency provides health information, employment counseling, and referral to schools. Counselors for the refugees come to REEP once per week, and other immigrants are given the social services phone number.

In order to keep in touch with issues that affect the language minority population, REEP participates in the Arlington County LEP Task Force, the Immigrant Task Force, and the Legalization Coalition.

Technology

Four or five years ago during a periodic self-evaluation, REEP decided that they needed to include technology in their curriculum. They investigated what might constitute a Learning Center and selected U.S. Basics because its instructional framework was similar to REEP's: it was based on MELT, it offered both functional and academic tracks, the company would provide technical assistance to REEP, CCP had interactive audio, it had an authoring system, and it had an open architecture, i.e., additional appropriate software could be added to the system. The original idea behind the Learning Center was to create a place where those in the workplace literacy program who had completed 60 hours of instruction could continue their language and literacy education. Since then, services have been expanded to the refugee and immigrant populations as well.

Technology Projects

REEP is currently working on creating interactive videodisc materials to help train students in housekeeping and food and beverage service sectors of the hotel/motel industry. The interactive videodisc lessons will let the non-native English speakers practice language in workplace situations. The initial videodisc materials were originally developed by the hotel/motel industry for native English speakers to teach them how to perform the jobs in the housekeeping and food and beverage area. REEP has repurposed them to teach workers the language needed for the jobs. As part of the strategy of improving the usability of the materials for language minority workers, all the characters in the video were given names and distinct episodes or segments were pulled out for further work. The design is for the same video to have two different levels of lessons (the higher level will be more text-based), and both lessons will relate to actual activities that might be performed by someone in that job and learner strategy training such as listening comprehension.

REEP is also involved in a People's Computer Company/Gannett/Digital project to use USA Today as the core curriculum for a computer-based reading program. Computers will be available 24 hours at the USA Today building in Arlington. REEP has arranged for ten of Hyatt Hotel's managerial staff to serve as paired tutors with ten ESL students.

Software

REEP has an extensive collection of software for the learners to use (167 entries including subsets of programs in their software list as of 15 April 1991). Both the available software and what the students want to do show some variety. One student had a job at a 7-11 store and used software designed to teach the user how to type because he thought the company would introduce computers and he wanted to be ready. Another student worked independently on a grammar program as he drilled on does/doesn't, eat/eats, etc.

Other Technology

REEP also employs video technology outside the Learning Center. For example, in one intermediate class that we observed, the teacher used a barcode reader and a VCR for a unit on occupations. The teacher scanned the barcode associated with a particular occupation and a picture of someone in that occupation would appear on the screen. The teacher prompted the class for what occupation was represented and what a person in that occupation did. During the second and third rounds, first print and then sound were added to the pictures, so the students could see and hear the name of the occupation and phrases like "a scientist works in a lab."

Program Effectiveness

REEP has several means of demonstrating program effectiveness. The staff point to retention and promotion rates, where their goal is that 75% of the students complete the course. About 60% of the students enrolled have mastered the competencies in order to move on the next level. Learners also fill out self-evaluation instruments during weeks four and ten. There are two instruments: one for A track students and a more detailed one for B track students. The instruments have the learners rate whether they speak English outside of class from never to every day, whether they are learning from not at all to a lot, and whether understanding English is always difficult, sometime difficult, or easy. The week four evaluation is returned to the student to compare with the week ten self-evaluation.

For the workplace literacy program, 80% of the students complete the course, indicating that retention is very good. The program is also required by the funder to give some form of valid and reliable test as a pre- and post-test. REEP currently uses the BEST for this and they are in the process of developing a criterion-referenced test. Workplace learners also use a form of self-evaluation. Supervisors submit feedback at the end of class regarding changes in the employees' communication skills, productivity, attendance, self-esteem, and safety.

REEP also administers program-wide tests using the BEST and/or CASAS to ensure that the correspondence between SPL levels and the general ESL tracks are still valid.

Finally, some of REEP's projects require an outside evaluator (the workplace program), and most are monitored and evaluated by their funding source.

SITE VISIT CONDUCTED: August 28-30, 1992

INTERVIEWEES

Inaam Mansoor — Director

Elaine Squeri — Workplace Literacy Coordinator
Suzanne Grant — ESL Coordinator
Susan Huss — Evening ESL Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator
Carol Van Duzer — Curriculum Specialist
Kenwyn Schaffner — Manager, Adult Learning Center (ALC)
Joan Rubin — Project Coordinator, Interactive Videodisc
Jennifer Smith — Assistant Project Coordinator, Interactive Videodisc
Betty Lynch — ESL, ALC, and Workplace Teacher
Molly Kirby — Refugee Coordinator and Staff Development Coordinator
Andy Anderson — ESL Teacher and Outreach Specialist
Donna Vanderhoff — Office Manager
Lynda Terrill — ESL, ALC, and Workplace Teacher
Sue Carroll — ESL, ALC, and Workplace Teacher
Susan Otero — Family English Coordinator and ESL Teacher

Site Report

Lao Family Community of Minnesota Family English Literacy Program

976 W. Minnehaha Avenue	**Project Coordinator:**
St. Paul, MN 55104	**Geoffery Blanton**

> **The Hmong community "owns" this family literacy program.**
> -- FELP project coordinator

Number of Literacy Students	350

Key Components

- curriculum originally competency-based
- literacy program run by mutual assistance association in collaboration with an ABE program
- literacy classes offered in communities where learners live
- bilingual approach

Special Features

- bilingual community members as teachers at lower levels
- Hmong literacy classes as well as ESL literacy
- family literacy with concentration on adults
- special emphasis on cultural appropriateness
- Hmong pre-school service for literacy program participants provided through the St. Paul schools Early Childhood and Family Education (ECFE) program

Funding Sources for Literacy-Related Activities

- U.S. Department of Education, Family English Literacy Program (FELP)
- St. Paul United Way for Hmong pre-school program
- Partnership with United Way of America and UPS Foundation
- Otto Bremer Foundation
- General Mills Foundation
- Pillsbury-Grand Metropolitan Food Sector
- City of St. Paul

- The Minneapolis Foundation
- U.S. West Foundation
- First Bank Foundation
- Western State Bank
- Minneapolis Department of Education

Background/Program Context

The Minneapolis/St. Paul area has the largest urban concentration of Hmong people in the United States, and there are about 20,000-25,000 Hmong people in Minnesota. This influx of recent immigrants has overburdened existing literacy programs for adults and strained the school system. Currently, Hmong children comprise about 18-20% of the students in the St. Paul school district.

Lao Family Community (LFC) of Minnesota began in 1977 as a membership organization and incorporated in 1983 as a community-based mutual assistance association. Its mission statement says that it will both promote self-sufficiency for its members and preserve their cultural heritage. The association is governed and managed by a board composed exclusively of Hmong people, all of whom are former refugees and are now residents of St. Paul. Unlike other boards that remain aloof from ongoing operations, the board is involved in program management on a day-to-day basis. They closely monitor all aspects of the programs at the Center from the justification of expenditures to program curriculum and hiring teachers.

The Lao Family Community runs a number of programs in addition to the literacy programs. These include several employment assistance programs, legal help, and several projects dealing with youth (teen pregnancy prevention and Youth Looking Forward, a program to help teens at risk for delinquency). When a family joins the mutual assistance association (at a cost of $20 per family), they are entitled to a variety of services in addition to the ones provided at the Lao Family Center -- the association becomes responsible for their funeral expenses, families get a discount at a warehouse club, etc. In addition, some sixty group leaders (prominent Hmong people) provide services such as mediation and community conflict resolution to Lao Family members.

LFC has offered ESL classes for seven years, and the family literacy component has been available for five years. The principal literacy program, the Family English Literacy Program, serves about 250 families. The program was designed jointly by Hmong people who understand the learners' needs and American educational staff skilled in the U.S. educational system. The literacy program employs the model of bilingual refugee residents working as peers with American teachers to deliver literacy services to second language adult learners. The Family English Literacy Program strives to maintain Hmong linguistic and cultural values while at the same time addressing unemployment and problems of cultural adaptation by making full use of the bilingual staff. In addition to teaching, the bilingual staff give feedback to the project coordinator and American staff on the cultural appropriateness of certain approaches or particular materials.

Student Characteristics

All of the students served by the Lao Family Community are members of Hmong family clans from Laos. Many Hmong have very little or no education, and the education with which they are familiar bears little resemblance to the American school experience. Like many other refugee groups, large numbers of Hmong experience unemployability and cultural adaption problems because of very limited English proficiency. The literacy program thus represents an attempt to combine the personal goals of the students with the similar government goal (self-sufficiency). Literacy services are needed to help them overcome cultural and language barriers to full participation in employment, community, and school activities. A key focus of the family literacy program is to strengthen their role as parents and to help them understand the school experience of their children.

All of the adult Hmong students have come through the refugee camps in Thailand. Despite the six months at the camps spent in English classes focused on oral skills, students enter the Lao Family program with minimal English skills. There is often a time lapse of three months since the last time they took the class -- due to processing and secondary migration from Texas -- so that students may have forgotten what they have learned.

Although ideally both parents would participate in the family literacy classes, in practice there are more women than men. The men are often employed or taking pre-employment training. Many of the learners come from families that are in crisis as they try to respond to an American society that is very different from their own, to acquire a new language, and to survive economically. They must negotiate back and forth between old and new cultures and cope with changing roles. As a result, the Hmong adult learners often do not progress very fast in acquiring English proficiency.

Program Design

The Family English Literacy Program is a collaborative effort of the Lao Family Community, which administers the program, and the St. Paul schools Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program, which provides assessment, materials as needed, space and equipment, and consultation to the project coordinator. Trained volunteer tutors are provided by the Minnesota Literacy Council.

The Lao Family Community family literacy program meets during eleven-week cycles. Although the program nominally offers seven levels of classes, in practice, most classes span two levels. For example, the beginning class is a 0,1 level and the next may be a 2,3 level. Classes, which average 15 students, meet for three hours either in the morning at 8:30 or in the afternoon at 12:30. Classes are held from Monday through Thursday; there are no classes on

Friday. A total of approximately twelve literacy classes are offered by the program; of those, half are federally funded and the rest are locally funded. The latter often continue through the summer. Although the program previously operated with an open entry/open exit policy, the program now makes a strong effort to have students start class at the beginning of a cycle and complete the class.[1] The program also finds that it must make hard choices between providing opportunity for more students and serving fewer students in greater depth.

Below is a list of the program sites:

Mount Airy - This is a community center run by Lao Family Community. Two teachers teach morning and afternoon classes, Monday through Thursday. They teach the lowest level.

Phalen Lake Elementary School - Forty-five percent of the children at this school are Hmong, and the literacy classes here serve the parents of these children. They have child care during the daytime and in the evening at a Hmong home day care provider. Classes are held for levels 5-6 in the morning, levels 3-4 in the afternoon, and from 5:30-8:30 pm for levels 0-3.

Frogtown Family Resource Center - Classes here are a collaboration between the state, the city, the public schools and Lao Family Community. At this site, in addition to the literacy program for the parents, there is a supplemental early childhood program. As a further step, a parent educator comes for one hour a week to talk to learners (with a translator) about parenting and/or school issues. The literacy class, which is mainly level 2-3, is held from 12:30-3:30 pm.

St. Adalbert's School - LFC offers the full range of literacy classes at this site. Four classes - Levels 0-1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6 - meet for three hours a day from 8:30 am - 11:30 am (morning class) or from 12-3 pm (afternoon class), four days a week. They also have a Hmong day care provider in the neighborhood.

Home Tutoring program - Some families with at-risk children in kindergarten or first grade qualify for double services: in addition to adult literacy instruction, a special additional program funded by Title VII of the Bilingual Education Act provides bilingual in-home tutoring for the child and the parents. The tutors encourage parents to get involved in parent-child activities, to check their child's backpack for messages from the school, and to talk with their child for at least 10 minutes a day in Hmong or English.

Additional literacy services - The following other literacy services are provided by LFC: literacy on a tutorial basis at two public housing sites; transitional ESL-ABE literacy to Southeast Asians referred by the city jobs and training department; literacy to prepare for a job as a certified nursing assistant; and Hmong literacy as part of the city's Southeast Asian Access program.

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[1] A cost analysis undertaken by the program showed that it cost about $100 to do intake on one student. The intake process involves registration, testing and assessment with placement.

The goals of the family literacy program can be summarized as follows: to help parents become more involved in their children's education, to tailor their services to the needs of the families involved, and to help learners achieve what they want to learn. The program has moved in five years from an initial focus on oral survival skills towards more of an emphasis on reading and writing (though often in the context of their children's school).

Instruction

Literacy curriculum

The curriculum is designed to increase functional skills while, at the same time, emphasizing the relationship between literacy and the socio-cultural context of the learners' lives. The assistant director of Lao Family Community wrote the initial literacy curriculum, which was based on the Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) competencies. Basically, the MELT curriculum was adapted to the goals of the Lao program by combining survival English with parental involvement in the education of their children. The competency list was pared down with competencies related to the public schools assuming a primary role (PTA, notes from the teachers, vocabulary for communicating with the school). The curriculum for the lower literacy levels includes survival topics for communicating with mainstream society (giving and getting medical information, asking for an interpreter, identifying oneself, reading signs), while the higher level curriculum puts more emphasis on schools and job-seeking and job-keeping skills (phoning in sick, understanding benefits, reading a paycheck stub). The goal is to build the learners' ability to comprehend written material and ask questions about it. In recent years, the family literacy program has moved towards a greater focus on literacy in terms of reading and writing than it previously had.

The literacy program is constantly trying to find the right balance between Hmong and English. As the chart below shows, the program introduces literacy skills in Hmong at the lowest class levels. For example, learners at level 0,1 learn the Hmong alphabet and tone markers and move to reading and writing stories in Hmong at level 2. By level 2, students have been taught the English alphabet and how to fill out simple forms. At the higher levels, the literacy curriculum includes pre-employment skills and work-related content.

The program uses real-life materials drawn from two different aspects of the students' lives, their roles as parents and as members of the Hmong community. At the lower levels, these materials are freely translated back and forth between Hmong and English. Notes or bulletins sent home from the children's schools become reading matter for the whole class, and Hmong folk tales serve to stimulate and develop native language literacy. The folk tales not only give students a chance to talk about something with which they are familiar, they also provide a way for the bilingual teachers to introduce literature into their classes.

Materials such as notes are treated as whole texts, not strings of words. For example, researchers saw a lesson explaining report cards. Not only was there a mock-up of a report card, but, after discussing what each of the sections was used for, the class divided into pairs and awarded grades to a hypothetical child whose achievement was described in somewhat funny detail by the parenting educator. Afterwards, the class compared notes about the grades they gave.

One of the emphases of the program is to increase parent involvement in their children's education. Toward that end, students spend three weeks each fall and spring preparing for parent-teacher conferences. Students are also encouraged to bring to class written materials that they get from schools such as report cards, permission slips, and notes from teachers. If one learner has trouble understanding the school's missive, it is likely that others have the same problem. Often the teacher will incorporate the material from the school into the lesson. For example, the class might take vocabulary from the material and use it in conversation or write a reply to a note that has been sent home. Such activities go beyond helping parents to understand the schools and the role they play in their children's lives to help learners adapt culturally.

The program continually tries to present material in culturally appropriate ways, but it does not always succeed the first time. For example, the Hmong believe it is wrong to recognize an individual's efforts, for it implies that he is better than other people. Thus, when the literacy program wanted to recognize a student who had gotten a job, he left the school rather than lose face by getting recognition.

Presentations in Hmong from community resources on such topics as public health, crime prevention, and tenant rights are integrated into the curriculum to increase knowledge of the new culture, build vocabulary, and offer support to the refugees. Students also take field trips to gain knowledge of the new culture. Field trips are accompanied by oral discussion, journal writing, and reading.

Sample Competencies at Various Levels

Level	**Survival Topics**	**Hmong literacy**	**English literacy**	**Children's education**
0,1	give personal info, use bank cash card emergencies get medical help basis food and clothing needs	understand alphabet and tone markers	know alphabet	know child's grade, school name, teacher's name
2	write personal info health: body parts doctor's appt read street names state & read dates	read stories and write a short note in Hmong		informed of parent-teacher conference; encouraged to go; understand report card and symbols used
3	write a check, report emergency, make dr appt, understand grocery labels	transition activities oral and written	read simple stories related to competencies	write an absence note, bring notes from school to class,
4	ask dr about treatment, describe housing problem, know traffic signs, phone for bus info, read grocery ads, understand a receipt		read simple passages related to competencies, write short notes based on competencies, write lists	understand subjects at school, know school bus schedule, have simple conversation with school, know about Head Start and pre-school
5-6	fill out job application, understand basic job terminology, understands paychecks & benefits, understand household bills		take and write short messages, write simple notes based on competencies	know about extra-curricular activities, other educational options

Transition from Hmong to ESL

For those who are not yet literate, literacy is taught initially by introducing the Hmong alphabet alongside the English alphabet. Instruction at the lowest levels begins with oral Hmong, then moves to written Hmong in such classroom activities as translating notes from school and writing about what happened the day before. As students become more comfortable with reading and writing (most students can read Hmong by level 2-3), more and more English is introduced until eventually instruction is mainly in English. The philosophy of the program is first to begin with what the students already have (the Hmong language) and then to use that as a base for learning English.

Approaches

In general, the strategy of the family literacy program is to build whole language around the appropriate competencies for that level. For example, a lesson might revolve around various shopping strategies including reading clothing tags and prices at the supermarket. The class might first role-play a grocery store shopping expedition and end with an LEA group story. Individually, learners might write about their first time shopping in the U.S., and the teacher might bring in some realia that fit into the grocery store theme. Audio or video tapes that include scenes of people shopping might also be played during class. In addition, nuts and bolts competencies like writing a check, computing costs, and using coupons would be appended as appropriate. Shopping as a topic might be encountered at various class levels, but the language and context at a higher level would be very different from those at the lower levels. In addition, the writing activities would be more advanced, e.g., higher level students might write a letter of explanation rather than a story about their own shopping experience.

Teachers in the family literacy program use different approaches. One intermediate literacy class that researchers observed spent some time with a simple "What did you do this morning?" to which there were a host of answers: I cleaned house, I went to see why my food stamps have been cut, I slept, I went shopping for pants, I went to work. The class then went on to discuss the lesson for the day on registering a child for school. Another intermediate class may be more structured from the beginning of class: the class will read a dialogue, go over the difficult words, practice the dialogue with a partner, and then write a dictation that employs some of the same words.

The program strives to remain flexible when they see that some approaches or activities do not work. For example, the program has learned that

- some social events are not successful since learners prefer to be in the classroom (but learners enjoy the regular parties at the end of every eleven week cycle.)
- field trips are not seen as something valuable (except field trips to worksites or family related sites, e.g. children's museums)
- Hmong learners are reluctant to discuss sensitive issues with non-Hmong people

Classroom Observation

Researchers observed the nine students in a 0,1 class on two successive days. The students ranged in age from young women in their twenties to a spirited man aged 76 with eleven children and 23 grandchildren.

On the first day, the teacher had written on the blackboard in Hmong a dialogue of a parent communicating about a child's school. Her view is that the Hmong dialogue helps the learners understand the same questions and answers when they hear and read them in English. In a choral reading, the teacher asked the questions in Hmong and the students read the answers in Hmong. At the end, the teacher asked the students to help her translate the questions and answers into English. Various students called out translations, and the teacher asked the class if this or that sounded right and received more suggestions. After an English translation was generated and written on the board, pairs of students read the questions and answers. However, as the students "read", they conveyed the meaning by adding words such as saying "How many children?" instead of "How many?" Finally, the teacher tested the learners' comprehension by asking the questions and having the students respond with respect to their own family. Some of the learners did not know the names of their children's teachers, and they were encouraged to ask their children and to bring the names to class. The teacher wrote on the board the names of all the schools attended by children of parents in the class, and the class practiced saying them.

The class then moved on to a review of filling in forms with personal information such as first and last names, address, spouse's name, phone number, etc. Sample lines from the form were written in Hmong on the blackboard. After a number of students have given their names and addresses and other information, the class turned to a new topic, transportation. Relevant vocabulary words were written on the board (car, walk, foot, bus, bicycle) and the teacher asked the students how they come to school, how their children go to school, and how much the bus fare is. After a short discussion, the class ended with the teachers telling the learners to write in their journals and bring them to class and read to her.

Class on the second day began with the teacher asking if anyone had something to read to the class. Journal writing on the topic of what you did yesterday had been the homework assignment, and a number of students volunteered. Both teacher and students switch back and forth to Hmong at various points as the class built up a list of Hmong sentences and words on the blackboard. The teacher frequently asked a second student what the first had said, and the first learner often had to repeat it. Students then asked each other questions such as "what do you like?" "I like to drive car." The teacher introduced the topic of the cardinal and ordinal numbers by asking a woman how many children she had (7) and how old they were (1 - 12 years), e.g., the first is 12, the second is 11, etc. As the class discussed how many children they had, their ages and sex, the teacher repeatedly asked the class "are there any questions you would like to ask or words you want to know?"

Once again, concepts were taught using both Hmong and English in the next phase of class on writing notes to a child's school: The teacher wrote various English words and their Hmong translation on the board (e.g., child menyuam, ill mob, doctor kw kho mob), then had the students repeat each of the English words after she said them. Finally, the teacher said the English word and the students gave the Hmong translation.

The next activity in the class was a cloze exercise in English with a Hmong translation available on the blackboard. Students received a piece of paper with a note to a teacher on it with some blanks in the text and a list of vocabulary words on the side. The teacher went around the room and helped learners who had difficulty. After an interval, she called on a student to read his note and corrected some of his pronunciation as he read. After a choral reading of the note, the students copied the Hmong version at the top of the page. They thus had a sample note that they could copy and send to a teacher whenever they needed one.

Writing Activities

The program believes that journal writing, encouraged at all levels but not really practical until level 2, develops vocabulary and enhances the functional use of literacy. It also can validate cultural activities by involving students in reading, writing, and oral discussion in the context of their own experiences. The family literacy program sees journal writing as a way for the learners to engage in critical thinking as they plan what they want to say and document how they feel. Dialogue journals are not widely used at the program.

Other writing activities are employed by the Hmong teachers. A teacher may ask his students to write (in Hmong) about what they did the day before or to write (in English) about a picture in a textbook. If the students are at a loss for how to proceed, the teacher will spend some class time discussing the topic or having the students think about something they know about e.g., their child's report card, their youngest child, or their farm in Laos. Another strategy is for students to interview each other and then to write a biographical sketch of their partner. The day we visited a level 3-4 class, the class discussed how they had registered their children for school and then used an illustration of a mother registering her daughter to write a group story about the process.

A favorite activity of one of the teachers was to cut pictures from magazines and to put a stack of these on a table in her class. Each beginning-level student was asked to choose a picture and to write a few lines of a story about the picture. At the beginning of the cycle when students are new to school, the teacher supplied guidelines for what they might write about the people in the picture: give the people names and ages, say whether they are married or single, state how many children they have, describe what he or she did last week, tell about what he or she will do next week, and relate what the people most like to do. In addition to encouraging students to write, this activity has the additional benefit of helping students to practice telling stories. The teacher tells the students that they can interact with their children via storytelling even if they cannot read and if they do not know English.

Multilevel Classes

Various teachers use different approaches for multilevel classes. One teacher divides the class into a higher level and a lower level group for writing, with an advanced student leading one of the two groups. Both groups then write stories about themselves in Hmong, then turn them into English. The teacher will emphasize the content expressed, the meaning, of the stories written by the higher level students, and she will work on tone markers and other mechanics of language with the lower level students. Another teacher mixes the higher and lower level students in groups that work on writing a story, with one student as scribe. After 15-20 minutes, the scribe reads aloud what they have written; the focus once again is on expressing meaning.

Learner-centered

The literacy program strives to use themes connected to the lives of the refugee population that it serves and to provide information in culturally appropriate ways. For example, when discussing grocery stores and food shopping, the classes took a field trip to the Asian market, not to the local Safeway. Similarly, pre-employment skills are directly connected with the desire of many students to get jobs and support themselves although employment is not a goal for everyone. Refugee families often suffer stress and strain as they come into contact with a new culture. To give voice to some of the students' concerns, classes have discussed the roles of husband and wife in the education of children and how family roles are changing throughout America (not just in refugee families).

The program does try to set up problems based on student experience. For example, the teacher may pass around a copy of a note that one student got from her child's school. The teacher asked the class if anyone could help the mother with the note and what they would do if they were she. One student volunteered that it was necessary to send money, but another said that all the note needed was a signature. At the lower levels, students bring to class various documents that they cannot understand such as bulletins from school, utility bills, and eligibility forms. The teacher may well develop a lesson around any or all of these forms.

Cultural Issues

The program has worked out ways to tackle sensitive issues in ways that respect Hmong culture. For example, health care and attendant beliefs about the body are vastly different in Laos and in America. A difficult issue sprang up during a recent measles epidemic when there was a strong desire by the program to explain the need for immunization in the literacy classes. Instead of plunging in directly, the program approached the Hmong group leaders and asked for permission to share the information on measles and immunization. After receiving consent, classes discussed how medical issues are perceived in Laos and in the U.S. and how immunization would help their children. Even with this effort, not all of the Hmong children whose parents participated in family literacy were subsequently immunized.

Cultural issues loom large in any number areas related to the children's education. For example, one Hmong woman sought the advice of her Hmong bilingual teacher about dealing with her teenage daughter. It turned out that the real problem was that the girl wanted to play basketball, but the mother thought that she might get hurt and refused to allow her to play. The bilingual teacher was able to suggest a number of alternative ways for the woman to look at the situation (watch the game yourself, see it as a form of exercise, is this important enough to alienate your daughter). Having teenagers herself, the teacher was able to add that "you know how it is. Teenagers are going to hate you right away when you say no."

Cultural issues also affect what information the learners are willing to supply to the program staff, and the bilingual teachers can bridge the gap. For example, the learners in general are reluctant to tell the non-Hmong members of the staff that they would like to discuss some issues that affect the community, such as community-police relations, Asian gangs, or the customs of early marriage (14-year old Hmong girls are given in marriage by their parents). Yet through the community members who serve as teachers, this information was communicated to the literacy program and appropriate speakers and other resources were found.

Cultural issues also play a part in classroom behavior. Teachers have observed that some Hmong women are hesitant to express themselves when men are present and that some wives are reluctant to ask about their children's education without getting their husbands' permission.

Student Feedback

Student feedback on aspects of the literacy program is formally solicited every cycle during a meeting between the project coordinator and representatives from each class. They talk about what the learners like and don't like about the literacy program. For example, students have

- said in past meetings that they wanted to study more math. The project coordinator responded by arranging a math class taught by a volunteer tutor and by acquiring a computer program aimed at math skills. However, he also made it clear to the students that the program's funding is primarily to teach people English.
- requested that there be more dictation in the classes, and the coordinator passed this comment along to the teachers.
- commented that a certain teacher is impatient. Such comments then become a factor in deciding whether the teacher should be assigned to teach at the lower levels.

The program has a questionnaire in Hmong and in English that is distributed to students at the end of each cycle. This questionnaire asks the students what they want to know more about e.g., police, citizenship, transportation, disciplining children.

In addition, the program has an annual questionnaire for the teachers asking them which topics interested their students the most and the least, which topics they think the students need more information about, and how they think the literacy program can be improved.

Like learners at other ESL literacy programs, the adult students at LFC family literacy program tend to begin classes with traditional ideas of what takes place in school and what the role of the teacher is. For example, they initially want grammar, dictation, and formal English instruction. They expect the teacher to tell them what they need to know, and they want books from which to learn. They even say "we want to finish the book," as opposed to reading selected parts of it. The family literacy program has responded by talking about these issues, and one teacher has come up with a way for the students to see that they are making progress every day. She summarizes for her students their accomplishments at the end of each class by saying today you

- listened to each other
- read a story about Laos
- wrote a note to a teacher.

Needs Assessment

The LFC family literacy program is managed by Hmong people, who are well positioned to assess and articulate the needs of their own population. In other words, needs assessment is somewhat built into the program structure.

One of the needs that has become apparent in the LFC family literacy program is the need for parents to understand the school system of their children, particularly given the lack of education and school experience among the Hmong. School policy and procedure varies significantly from school to school. This makes it very confusing for both individual families and for the community as a whole to try to understand what schools expect from students and their families -- especially when they can barely read and write. Therefore, the program focuses much of the curriculum on specific aspects of home/school communication: parent-teacher conferences, reading notes from the school, and writing notes to a child's teacher.

Intake

Intake for the family literacy program is done via an initial interview with the family counselor. During this time, he asks various questions related to the individual (name, date of birth, date of arrival in the U.S.), the household (number of children in the household and their ages), and the individual's prior education (school attendance in Laos, Thailand, and the U.S.). He records the answers on the program's registration form.

If it appears that the person's needs match with the literacy program's classes, he encourages the potential student to consider taking a literacy class but makes it clear that a commitment of twelve hours per week is required. If the person is interested in a class, they schedule a time to take the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), which gives the program information about the student's English literacy. Hmong literacy proficiency is not assessed during intake, and the program relies on the teachers to get a sense of students' Hmong literacy during the first few classes.

Based upon the results of the BEST and the amount of prior schooling that the learner has had, the counselor assigns the learner to a class at the beginning of the next cycle.

Some families with at-risk children in kindergarten or first grade qualify for double services: in addition to adult literacy instruction, a special additional program funded by Title VII of the Bilingual Education Act provides in-home tutoring for the child and the parents.

Orientation

The program requires that every learner attend an orientation session at the beginning of each eleven-week cycle, even if the student has been in the program during prior cycles. The purpose of the orientation is to get everyone together in one place at one time (actually, fifty students meet in the morning and fifty in the afternoon) to give the learners a common sense of purpose. The literacy program staff meets with the students at the library to be introduced and to inform learners about what they can expect. Orientation is held at the library specifically so all learners can get library cards and learn about the children's books section. The orientation usually last three hours and is videotaped for later critiquing and for those students not able to attend. Usually, a guest speaker talks for 20 minutes or so, and then there is a question and answer session lasting for 40 minutes or so. The most successful speakers have been Hmong police officers and Hmong public health officials who have been able to dispel fears in the community. A critical thinking exercise follows with students identifying a problem or issue then doing group work to come up with solutions to the situation.

Assessment and Progress Evaluation

A variety of assessment and progress evaluation tools are used in the literacy program. These included the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) which is given every cycle, competency checklists, an assessment of entries in the student's journal, and evidence of participation in their children's education.

Teachers document students' mastery of life skill competencies through the use of a competency checklist as part of assessment process. The program also uses journal writing to assess literacy needs and provide evidence of gains in reading and writing for both the teacher and the learner.

Both the children's and the adults' teachers observe positive changes in behavior attributable to the parents' better understanding of their children's education process. These include parents' attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering in children's classrooms, and accompanying classes on field trips. One family literacy teacher documents the program's impact by tracking the parents' activity in their children's school in two ways:

1. On a large calendar in the classroom, she notes which learners reported that they had gone to a school open house or a Head Start meeting or engaged in another school-related activity.

2. She has developed a form to record significant parent/child events such as attending a PTA meeting, volunteering at a Head Start school, or going to the library with the children.

The program is grappling with other ways to document changes in learners' awareness of their children's education and growth in their native language and English literacy. In practice, the progress is often very slow for the adult Hmong students, for their energy is used up just trying to survive in a new culture.

Staff meets at the beginning of each of the four cycles to determine when a student is ready to move on to the next level. A number of factors go into the group decision about promoting a student:

- the results of the BEST test
- how the student responds in class (as reported or documented by the teacher)
- how the student reacts in class (as reported or documented by the teacher)
- when and how fast the student has learned the material (based on a competency checklist matched to the curriculum)

The project coordinator has the final say about student movement between levels. When a students' promotion is being considered, the coordinator will ask their teachers what they learned and when did they learn it. However, if the teacher makes a "strong case" for either promotion or holding a student back, by presenting information from classroom observation about how the student learns, what works, and what doesn't, the coordinator usually goes along with the teacher's recommendation.

In terms of program effectiveness, that is, how do the teachers know that they are being successful, the program relies on the facts that students move up through the various levels of classes and later go on to training or to get a job. The teachers feel that the students accomplish their goals in the program. With regard to their children's education, the program measures its success by whether the parents participate (e.g., go to a PTA meeting) and whether they bring back information to share with the class.

Materials

The program has available an eclectic assortment of textbooks, but none is used on a routine basis. At all levels, the program has drawn from the *Parenting Curriculum for Language Minority Parents*, produced by the Sacramento-Stockton Family English Literacy Project.[2] This curriculum forms the basis of the parenting curriculum used by the LFC family literacy program. Actual documents from the schools comprise some of the materials used in the classes. For example, a teacher may use an overhead projector to show the class an information note that one of the parents received from school. Similarly, report cards for kindergarten and grades one through six may be discussed and translated into Hmong for the lower level students.

Other Program Components

Community Outreach

Community outreach for the literacy program in undertaken once a year or so. Outreach is done through the Hmong group leaders (each family in LFC has a group leader, and there are about 30 families per group). However, the literacy program gets a lot of referrals and is very well known, and classes are almost always filled to capacity. LFC's FELP is the only Hmong bilingual program in the St. Paul area. The literacy program staff does make an effort through personal contact at the schools to find families with kindergartners and first graders who qualify for Title VII programs and are thus eligible for the in-home tutoring program.

The programs strives to overcome the barriers to participation by providing child care, by offering literacy classes in communities where Hmong reside, and by reaching out through a home tutoring program.

Personnel

Staffing

The project coordinator for the family literacy program has a background in community relations and has worked for the Minnesota Literacy Council. He became acquainted with the Lao Family Center when he developed a volunteer workshop for Lao Family Community students and did some training at the center. His approach is to encourage a team effort.

All of the literacy classes are taught either by two ESL teachers from the St. Paul schools' ABE program with bilingual assistance or by LFC bilingual teachers.

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[2] Grace D. Holt, *Parenting Curriculum for Language Minority Parents*, Sacramento: California State University, Cross Cultural Resource Center, Sacramento-Stockton Family English Literacy Project, 1988.

The bilingual teachers who teach at the LFC family literacy program are all members of the Hmong community from which the learners come. The bilingual teachers usually have children in the public school system, so they know first hand about the educational system. They too are faced with economic and cultural barriers every day, so they can understand their students' situations. Some have GEDs and others have some academic credits at the college level. Bilingual teachers are selected by the LFC board, not by the literacy project coordinator, and the program's challenge is how best to capitalize on and develop the skills that individual teachers have. The bilingual teachers are given freedom to accomplish the project's objectives as they see fit. Some of the bilingual teachers will try newer teaching methods such as language experience stories, but others are reluctant.

Issues related to the level of training do come up among the staff occasionally. The project coordinator emphasizes that they all can learn from each other and that they all have different expertise. For example, bilingual staff can educate American staff in cultural issues specific to Hmong culture, such as traditional male/female roles and "saving face," while the American-trained staff may be better able to develop lesson plans and curriculum. In general, the lower-level teachers work together to develop the lower-level curriculum, and the higher-level teachers develop that for the higher-level classes. MELT provides the curriculum framework, but the program is moving towards a greater focus on literacy.

The program also has a volunteer coordinator to manage the twenty-five volunteers who help out in various ways at the literacy program. The coordinator places the volunteers, does record-keeping, and serves as a liaison between the staff and the volunteers. The volunteers include work-study students from area colleges and universities, as well as other community members who volunteer their time. The volunteers both work in classrooms under a teacher's supervision and provide one-to-one tutoring and enrichment activities such as tutoring in math.

In addition to the staff who concentrate on teaching literacy, the program avails itself of the talents of a number of specialists including a computing consultant, a child care specialist, and a parent educator.

Staff Development

An ESL specialist, whose salary is funded by a grant, is on loan to the Family English Literacy Program from the St. Paul schools ABE program. As the literacy program's lead teacher, she provides staff development for the bilingual teachers in the areas of curriculum development and adaptation, teaching strategies, problem solving, evaluation techniques, needs assessment, materials development and selection, and development of lesson plans. She also helps the teachers by informally sitting in on classes and offering suggestions for improvement. Some of the teachers like the newer methods to which they have been introduced, while others are reluctant to change their teaching style.

All teachers and other program staff receive release time one afternoon a week to plan together. During the weekly sessions, they work together on lesson plans and curriculum, do some problem-solving, and get feedback from each other on students and what they are teaching. The program had previously tried using the break-time between cycles to develop curriculum, but they find the weekly meetings more satisfactory.

Teachers get some training through the Adult Basic Education program, the Minnesota Department of Education, and from Title VII of the Bilingual Education Act. About 15-20 hours of staff development a year is provided.

Volunteer tutors are also provided with some staff development. The program provides the volunteers with a 9-hour workshop with a strong emphasis both on Hmong culture and on taking direction from the teacher with whom they work. In addition, tutors receive three inservices per year in a specialized area such as the Language Experience Approach or grammar. Or the inservice may relate to how to make the home tutoring work smoothly: one suggestion is to bring a "play bag" of small toys for the younger children in the household, so that the tutoring session is not interrupted.

The teaching staff is evaluated once or twice per year. Normally, the project coordinator plus another person such as a consultant or an ESL person from the state of Minnesota will sit in on classes and observe. They will compare notes on what they saw such as "too much reliance on the book and not enough student relevance." The program will then factor such observations into designing their next staff training.

The bilingual teachers have both a role in the Hmong community and a responsibility to the literacy program, and sometimes the two are in conflict. For example, the teachers may need to set limits on their community role in the sense that they cannot accept walk-in students, for the program has specific intake procedures.

An adult literacy consultant Lorraine Loitz, M.A., a former staff person from the Minnesota Literacy Council, also provides staff development in problem solving, lesson plan development, and understanding of Western teaching strategies. She has helped the program develop teacher evaluation tools and provided volunteer tutor training, program publicity, and management consultation to the Project Director.

Collaboration

The LFC collaborates with a number of other community partners in providing services. These partners provide staffing, instructional equipment, space, and consultation (St. Paul schools ECFE); training for child care providers (St. Paul Public Library); presentations on health, nutrition, and family planning (St. Paul Health Department); client referrals and outreach (Catholic Charities and District 7 Community Council); and classroom space (Jackson-Wheelock Service Center, Mt. Airy Neighborhood Center, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer).

Support Services

Access to literacy programs is a problem for learners in general. Transportation and child care have been identified as the greatest barriers to participation in literacy programs, particularly for those at the lowest level, and, as a result, the family literacy program provides both. Child care is routinely provided for parents in the literacy classes either on site or in a nearby day care home. The program provides transportation to library workshops and field trips. Perhaps the most important accessibility factor is the location of the classes. LFC literacy classes are held in the neighborhoods and communities where the learners live. So transportation barriers are somewhat removed, as many learners can walk to the center with their young children.

In addition, the staff informs students, who may never have been in school before, what a literacy class is and what they need to do to be invited to stay in class (e.g., proper behavior in class).

In keeping with the focus on family literacy, the program has activities for the whole family throughout the year. These include field trips, a celebration of the Hmong New Year, and an end-of-the-year picnic in May which is attended by all the Hmong families.

The program has a bilingual counselor who does intake, placement, and arranges support services. Lao Family also provides bilingual assistance in family counseling, child care, and home tutoring. The program coordinates with neighborhood schools, churches, public health, and legal aid agencies to provide services. LFC works closely with the St. Paul schools ABE program, which makes referrals to LFC and transfers literacy students into other programs. Responding to the expressed interest of the learners, LFC also offers a preparatory class for those interested in becoming Certified Nursing Assistants. This class is given bilingually.

The bilingual home tutoring program, which has a coordinator and fifteen home tutors, provides another avenue for encouraging parental involvement in the child's education. The curriculum for this program evaluates the level of parent involvement. An entry level task may be checking children's backpacks for homework from school. A family that has been in the program might have one parent volunteering in their children's classroom and might be communicating with their children's teacher on a regular basis.

Technology

The LFC Family English Literacy Program uses videotapes and audio cassettes in the classroom and is just starting to use computers as a supplement to classroom instruction.

Video

The Lao FELP teaching staff have found particularly useful the videotape series, *Newcomers to America*, produced by Oregon's State Department of Human Services, Refugee Program, in conjunction with a television station in Portland. The videos have been dubbed into Hmong and last 10-15 minutes, after which teachers lead a discussion about the topic of the video and follow up with worksheets in Hmong (developed at LFC). Topics in the series include a video called *Police - We're here to help* (dealing with the police is an issue for many of the Hmong people), others on the problems of raising children in America (parent involvement and adolescents in America) and families more generally (domestic violence, family law) and several on the roles of women (*Women at Work* and *Refugee Women in America*). To prepare this video series for their population, the family literacy program hired a consultant to develop some related materials such as vocabulary tests, writing lessons, and worksheets. (The materials that had come with the tapes were at too high a level for the learners in the program.) The program's experience has been that the topics on the tapes seem totally new to the students and that the students do not relate them directly to their own experience.

Videotapes have been so successful that the program is going to add a new series of tapes on survival language. These new tapes will allow students both to hear conversations and to see words on the screen. In addition, the Lao Family Community program has taped their own program related to their home tutoring program whose topic is how to get children ready to do homework. It is in Hmong with some English translation.

Computers

Computers have been used in the literacy program for just over a year. The family literacy program tries to use computers to "enhance" instruction, but they have had a difficult time finding software for the lowest level students and even intermediate level students. In general, the computers are used as additional resources and are not integral to the curriculum. The program currently has two IBM-compatible computers (largely used for administrative purposes) and four Macintosh computers. They plan to buy three more Macintoshes for their classrooms.

Many of the students report that they like using computers even if the software they use was developed for children. This positive attitude may result from their perception that, by learning the keyboard and basics of computers, they are opening the door to better-paying jobs.

In terms of software, the program has tried, not too successfully, to tailor children's software, available from the elementary school where some literacy classes are held, for use with adults. In addition, the local school district has purchased a software program that uses the Hmong language. The literacy program uses computers plus volunteer tutors to supplement the literacy classes in the areas of both grammar and math for their students.

Since the family literacy program is a small organization, it has collaborated with four other similar agencies to hire a computer consultant to help with the selection of hardware and software. However, funding for the consultant is not long term, and the availability of the consultant's time does not necessarily overlap with the availability of computer-related funds. As a result, several small programs have been developed using the HyperQuiz. For example, vocational exercises have been developed to help parents learn about job and school terminology.

The teachers would like to do lesson plans on the computers and maybe eventually use computers for Language Experience Approach stories in the classroom.

The Lao program has recently received grants to expand the use of technology in the literacy program. Staff development to enhance the use of technology in ESL classes has been provided through another grant awarded from the UPS Foundation to the St. Paul Schools ABE Program, Lao Family Community, and several other community-based literacy programs. Under this grant, FELP staff have learned some word processing and been exposed to evaluating software, tailoring software to a pre-literate population, using videos in the classroom, and making videos for Hmong parents to view at home to encourage parent involvement in school activities.

The program will buy more Macintosh computers for the '91-'92 school year and will put them directly in classrooms instead of in a computer lab. One teacher plans to develop a Hmong book for the students when the new computers arrive, and another teacher already has her students doing some language experience stories on a Macintosh. They currently use Microsoft Works for sample notes sent home from school to build vocabulary and explain the meaning of words. The software starts with one of three different notes about field trips or excusing an absence and then breaks the note down into simpler components. Students can move at their own pace. They can respond to the note and then print it. The program faces challenges in determining how to integrate the use of classroom computers into the curriculum.

LFC also uses computers for administrative work. In fact, one member of the LFC staff developed and maintains a database of student information.

SITE VISIT CONDUCTED: September 25-27, 1991

INTERVIEWEES

Geoffery Blanton -- Project coordinator

Tou Sue Lee -- Volunteer manager/Home tutoring coordinator/Bilingual teacher
Margaret (Peggy) Holper -- Lead ESL teacher (certified in ESL)
Joua Moua -- Bilingual teacher
Kou Lee -- Bilingual teacher
Chue Xiong -- Bilingual counselor

Katherine Cohen -- Assistant director of Lao Family Community
Betty McKensie -- Basic skills teacher
Sylvia Kroftschk -- Basic skills teacher

Ying Vang -- Executive director of Lao Family Community